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THE PHILOSOPHY OF FAITH

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AN ENQUIRY

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BY

BERTRAM BREWSTER

"FAITH, voluntarily reposing on views naturally presenting themselves to us, because through these views alone we can fulfil our destiny, sees our knowledge, and pronounces that 'it is good,' and raises it to certainty and conviction.'

FICHTE.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK, BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA
1913

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ERRATA.

Page 47, line 17, *for* "manifestation" *read* "manifestations."

Page 78, lines 1 and 2, *for* "Love" *read* "love."

Page 197, line 22, *after word* "interpretation" *insert* comma.

The author desires to note here also the following emendation :—

Page 182, line 16, *instead of* "indeed more than any other" *insert* "alone, amongst mortals,".

PHILOSOPHY OF FAITH

INTRODUCTION

A MAN'S beliefs, no less than his actions, should be conformable to reason. That is a principle which may safely be assumed in all philosophical literature; since whoever does not admit it must be taken to be not amenable to reasoning. But the principle, so expressed, is not without ambiguity, and very liable to be misinterpreted. In belief, as in conduct, we may fitly call that rational which is either prescribed immediately (as we hold) by reason; or, secondly, which can be shown to be conducive to ends which reason prescribes or adopts as actual. But reason, in those traditional philosophies which have been most widely assimilated by the common sense of Anglo-Saxon peoples, has been regarded as an unique, self-sufficing faculty, which alone is competent for the investigation of truth and fact, or for estimating the validity and significance of the evidence presented by experience. Hence it is often taken for granted—though quite inconsequently, even from such premises—that no

belief can be rational which is not directly vouched for by this faculty as true, or as more or less probable, the degree of belief in this latter case being proportional to the probability.

In the schools this high and exclusive pretension of the understanding has been denied extensively enough on grounds strictly philosophical. The more ambitious thinkers, in view of its evident limitations, have alleged frequently some higher and distinct faculty, called Transcendental Reason, or otherwise fancifully designated: this, however, to the generality seems either unintelligible or fallacious. Whether reason be properly a faculty at all, and not merely a name for a certain set of mental habits, or tendencies, has come lately into question. A faculty, however, is simply a power of the mind. Now it is not disputed that we have the power of thinking according to certain recognised methods, called logical. Such thinking includes induction, or a certain mode of interpreting the particular facts of experience: systematically extended, it is what sustains the fabric of the sciences. It presupposes, however, and depends for all its validity (as is generally understood) upon a number of assumptions or postulates which, therefore, cannot themselves be established by any logic, since all logic presupposes them. Whether any and how many of these postulates can be guaranteed by reason itself as valid and true; nay further, whether reason, as a common

possession of mankind, be anything more than just that power or faculty of thinking logically, is always matter of dispute.

It is the first business of reason as the organ of philosophy to understand its own processes. Should it be found that actually reason cannot, on its own responsibility, guarantee the validity of the scientific method as an instrument of real knowledge, still that method would not be discredited. It is certain that we must hold to the scientific method. Only let us understand clearly why we do so.

In fact reason, starting from its own logical postulates as merely provisional, has no difficulty in proving from those very premises that some at least of them are theoretically questionable and dubious; yet at the same time finds very good practical and passional reasons for adhering to them, and to the method based upon them, with the most absolute assurance. Now it is evident at once that these same practical and passional considerations, or analogous ones, may have their legitimate applications in higher departments of speculation.

This merely practical and passional element may be considered as the mortar or cement in the structure of knowledge, or of rational belief, which is nowhere more indispensable than in the basal concrete. Its existence and indispensableness have been largely overlooked or ignored formerly: the great majority at least having

(as we may say) conceived reason as constructing the edifice with materials of sensation alone (with or without the aid of intuitive principles). Many have even considered that faculty as properly employed in rigorously picking out and excluding the cement from every part of the building, the base only excepted, and more particularly as undermining in this way, or lopping away ruthlessly the upper towers, battlements, and pinnacles, whence alone any celestial or extensive prospect had been obtainable: as to the cement in the foundations, being invisible to them, its existence troubled them not at all for the most part. This latter class are known popularly as Rationalists.

To found an argument for higher beliefs upon an initial scepticism in regard to all knowledge whatever, is, though perfectly reasonable, as we hold, still somewhat paradoxical and offensive to many. Hence it is well to understand at once that the possibility of a philosophy of voluntary faith providing in some sort for such higher beliefs is not necessarily dependent upon any such sceptical argument. Let us assume then, for the moment, that 'positive knowledge' is something really indubitable, in the acceptance or rejection of which volition is concerned only in so far as more or less of effort is needful for the discovery and apprehension of it. The maxim of Rationalism, in the above popular application of the term, may be thus formulated:—

A man should believe nothing implicitly that is not self-evident or demonstrable to reason; and in questions of probability, belief should be proportional to evidence.

How this principle is itself thought to be substantiated, or what kind of evidence or reasoning it is grounded upon, is none too clear for the most part. It is commonly taken for granted[1] (owing partly, perhaps, to the ambiguity above noticed, p. 1). Yet certainly it is very far from self-evident to most people.

The 'common sense' of mankind, while recognising a principle of intellectual impartiality in general, declares plainly and unmistakably that it is not of universal application. In practical life, at any rate, there are many exceptions. Hopefulness, or an expectation of good in excess of strict probability, is commended, both for its immediate effects on mind and body and because such an expectation may often contribute to its own fulfilment. If a man has to leap over a chasm, he must leap confidently. In battles, physical and moral, we are taught to expect victory, and 'croaking' is not permissible though the Armada be upon us. One must have faith in one's medical man; in one's power to over-

[1] "We call men reasonable so far as their beliefs are formed by some conscious logical process; by a deliberate attempt to frame and to verify general rules as to phenomena of all kinds."—Sir L. Stephen, *An Agnostic's Apology*. We look in vain through these apologetic essays for any attempted justification of this fundamental position.

come evil habits. It is generally desirable to expect long life, while not being unprepared for death. So again, in regard to things present, cheerfulness, or a disposition to 'look at the bright side,' is universally approved. Charitableness, or a certain favourable bias in judging one's neighbours, is inculcated so far as consistent with prudence. It is good for them and for ourselves, and tends to good relations mutually. These are common-sense truisms—platitudes, if you will—and express the mind of the people, if anything does.

That is to say, that in these merely personal and particular relations at all events truth or probability as such, irrespectively of its content, is not regarded as unconditionally valuable, but its claims may be overborne, frequently, by considerations of expediency or utility.

In regard to philosophical theories and religious doctrines, it is true, the case is not so plain. The views of the 'man in the street' are here generally nebulous, or derived from authority. The true verdict of the popular conscience is only to be collected from the practical attitude of intelligent and disinterested natures. Now we find, in philosophy, doctrines which appear subversive of morality are generally condemned irrespectively of evidence. Doctrines considered fatalistic, for example, are commonly rejected, though it be in spite of all appearances, by those who so consider them. In religion and theology we find men of

intelligence and virtue equally amongst the ranks of the free-thinkers and of the obscurantists and dogmatists, and amongst intermediate sections. What determines them is an instinctive appreciation of consequences. A man will advocate free inquiry so long, and so long only, as he thinks his own most cherished convictions are not jeopardised. Or we may say: broadly speaking, the principle of Rationalism finds acceptance with two classes of persons; those, namely, who conceive that such 'extra-beliefs' as seem to them indispensable are not extra-beliefs at all, but such as can be established upon a basis of probable reasoning at any rate, and, secondly, the few whose aspirations and sympathies are so contracted that no extra-beliefs seem to them indispensable or perhaps even desirable. There are exceptions, doubtless. There is such a thing, doubtless, as a deliberate sacrifice of other ideals that have become secondary to the single ideal of intellectual impartiality which has become supreme. But this is not common sense, but scientific enthusiasm. Public opinion, upon the whole, disapproves it as one-sided, and fanatical. What is required of a man is not that he should limit his assent to what is demonstrable, but only that he should not pretend to believe what he knows 'in his heart of hearts' to be incredible.

The burden of proof, then, lies upon the shoulders of the Rationalists: their maxim is the

reverse of a truism. Nor, so far as we are aware, has any serious attempt yet been made to establish it. Such grounds as have been alleged now and again by popular writers are clearly unsatisfactory and fallacious. Thus, for example, the late Professor Huxley:—"The justification of the agnostic principle" (practically the same principle, as he enunciates it) "lies in the success which follows upon its application, whether in the field of natural, or of civil, history; and in the fact that, so far as these topics are concerned, no sane man thinks of denying its validity."[1]

That is to say, assuming the chief end of man to be simply the advancement of knowledge, in the scientific sense, and the avoidance of all possibility of error; that object is best secured by keeping to what is scientifically clear and certain. An unimpeachable inference certainly. But then, that latent assumption is the very thing to be proved, namely: that knowledge as such, and knowledge alone, is the chief good, and that for the risk of error there can be no possible compensation or justification. Now a man may conceivably have other ends in his thinking, some of which may perhaps seem to him no less important, and no less justifiable. So long as knowledge, in the scientific sense, is the thing aimed at—within the spheres, namely, of "natural and civil history"—evidence, in the scientific

[1] *Essays*, "Agnosticism and Christianity."

sense, is clearly indispensable. But how does that prove that in other departments of thought, where this kind of knowledge and evidence, as it is held, is strictly impossible and out of the question, belief, even certitude, if we can attain to it by any means, may not be still legitimate and valuable?

Again, much is said, or used to be said, about intellectual honesty; and Professor Huxley in particular was wont to characterise all belief not founded upon scientific evidence as an immoral pretence. This, of course, indicates a real danger. From the recognition, namely, of a belief as legitimate though not demonstrable it is an easy step to the profession of what one does not really believe. Nevertheless the legitimacy of the belief, could one attain without scientific evidence to a real belief, is clearly unaffected. Now it is well understood that there are sources of conviction other than evidential, in the scientific sense. Hence the talk about dishonesty is simply irrelevant. No man is dishonest who professes no more than he actually believes, and whose motives are pure and not merely self-indulgent and selfish, however little his belief be grounded upon intellectual considerations.

In the ethical essays of W. K. Clifford we are told that belief without sufficient evidence (of the scientific kind) is sinful; that it is wrong always, everywhere, and for every one: and for this

reason, that such belief is "stolen in defiance of our duty to mankind." "That duty," he explains, "is to guard ourselves from such beliefs as from a pestilence which may shortly master our own body and then spread to the rest of the town."[1] That is to say, this kind of belief is sinful because it will corrupt others. But why, pray, should it corrupt others, unless because it is sinful—which is the thing to be proved? It is impure because it is infectious or contagious! Now health itself may be infectious or contagious, as we know. Clifford evidently was led on here by a generous fervour in defiance of logic. The truth is, as we have seen, that the alleged impurity or immorality of all belief not grounded upon sufficient evidence is a baseless assumption, or grounded itself upon evidence hopelessly insufficient. The evidence shows, indeed, that much of such belief is immoral, because unreal; much more, because its cause or voluntary motive is impure, containing selfish and immoral ingredients. The universal, however, remains undemonstrated. If a man really believes a proposition he must believe it to be true, and must probably conceive himself to have evidence for it of some kind, though it be not of the kind called scientific, or not such as others can recognise at all. It is written, faith is the evidence or proving (ἔλεγχος) of things not seen. His love of truth, therefore, is not necessarily impaired in any degree, or affected, by the mere

[1] *Lectures and Essays*, "Ethics of Belief."

fact of his believing what to other people seems uncertain. It is true, if the proposition, as often happens, be amenable to scientific tests, and he has failed wilfully to apply those tests impartially, then indeed there is, or may be, an offence against truth, and this offence must tend to repeat itself, and may be imitated by other people. We say there *may be* an offence, because there is still the further question even then, whether the claims of truth can ever be overridden by superior obligations, as happens actually in practical life, for example, when we tell a lie to prevent murder or other calamities.

The Rationalist as such, as Mr. Arthur Balfour remarks, is not a philosopher. He is simply a person whose temperament and training dispose him to a more or less exclusive reliance upon 'reason,' by which is meant usually the "prevalent mode of interpreting sense-perception." Hence it is not surprising that he should eschew fundamental questions and take for granted the validity of prepossessions which he shares with so many of his intellectual associates. It is true there are and have been philosophic Rationalists —Professors Clifford and Huxley cannot justly be refused the title—but it would seem that the Rationalism of these, too, is not grounded upon philosophy. That formal justification of their position which we are entitled to expect from them is either not forthcoming or is such as will not bear even cursory examination.

"But Rationalism is simply the spirit of science, or of genuine philosophy." Many evidently imagine so, and it is of course easy enough to cut the knot in that fashion. Huxley himself was not above this expedient. The agnostic principle, he tells us in another place, is "as old as Socrates; the great principle of Descartes; the fundamental axiom of modern science." He thus enunciates it. Positively, "in matters of the intellect, follow your reason" (he means of course follow rational proofs and scientific evidences) "as far as it will take you, without regard to any other consideration. And negatively: in matters of the intellect, do not pretend" (he means, presumably, do not persuade yourself or allow yourself to think) "that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable."

Now, if it were true that this principle is an axiom of science, there would still be a question how far the claims of science ought to prevail over conflicting obligations, if such can be shown to exist. But it is not true; and the principle, if it is to stand as a scientific maxim, must be differently stated.

It is an axiom of science, undoubtedly, that whatever is amenable to scientific tests must be tried by those tests without fear or favour; and further, if we except certain indispensable postulates, that nothing is to be accepted as true *for science* which is not scientifically demonstrable. The reason of which latter principle is, first, in

regard to scientific questions, because it is found by experience that in this department there is no other safeguard against error; and secondly, in regard to questions beyond the scope of science, for the sake of unanimity, and to avoid confusion. For science being the one method the validity of which is acknowledged practically by every one, it is of the greatest importance to keep separate the genuine results of this method, and not to mix them with other doctrines which may be matter of doubt and dispute. That a votary of science, however, in respect of his private convictions and hopes personally cherished, is bound to confine himself to what can be established scientifically is no axiom of science, but a most unwarrantable assumption. As a fact we find scientists attached individually to a great variety of creeds not scientific; and it must be admitted that the efficiency of their labours has been impaired sometimes where those extra-beliefs have impinged upon the field of their investigations. In this and other ways the special forms which belief has taken in the past have often been inimical to science. But this fact is nothing to the purpose, and merely proves that those particular doctrines were, so far, not in accordance with reason, or were attended by an unreasonable distrust of science which perhaps was no logical consequence of the beliefs themselves.

If it were true that in matters of the intellect any regard for interests not purely intellectual

must remain permanently inimical to the progress of knowledge—which Heaven forbid—still this would not justify the principle as an axiom of science. The relative insignificance of those interests would first have to be demonstrated—just as it is not an axiom of hygienics that a man must never do work detrimental to his health when this is indispensable to the gaining of a livelihood, or for some other good and necessary object.

It would appear, then, that the reasonableness of voluntary belief is at least matter for investigation, and in establishing thus much we are not dependent upon sceptical arguments. Yet these latter are sometimes an useful auxiliary, and one cannot help remarking here upon the inconsistency of 'empirical' Rationalists, who are obliged to admit the fundamentally and irremediably hypothetical character of all science, yet condemn beforehand all extra-scientific beliefs, merely because hypothetical. That knowledge cannot be grounded upon experience alone must be recognised at present by all adequately instructed and clear-headed persons. The logic of J. S. Mill and his school, so admirable as an exposition of scientific method, is utterly inadequate as a *rationale* of scientific belief: nor is the modified empiricism of Spencer any improvement upon it in this respect. So Huxley had to confess latterly that "the ground of every one of our actions, and the validity of all our reasonings,

rest upon the great act of faith, which leads us to take the experience of the past as a safe guide in our dealings with the present and the future." In answer to which he merely pleaded, somewhat feebly for so pungent a writer: "But it is surely plain that faith is not necessarily entitled to dispense with ratiocination because ratiocination cannot dispense with faith as a starting-point."

Not necessarily! Never, in the writer's opinion. But the question is, what kind of ratiocination is needed to justify faith? Not proof or verification surely; otherwise it can never be justified *qua* faith, and belief in the future, on the Huxleian showing, could never be justifiable at all. All belief, at bottom, must in that case be unjustifiable; faith, at any rate, could not be justified until it were no longer faith, but knowledge. Meantime we may note that knowledge itself, for the empirical agnostic, depends upon faith; and thus much of faith at any rate is justifiable even in his view. And why justifiable, pray, unless on the ground of its indispensableness? And if so, may not other things conceivably be indispensable besides elementary knowledge? Huxley here broke the ice of prejudice, dipped his fingers, so to speak, in the bath of philosophy, and then—went back incontinently to bed! That is the way with Rationalists by temperament. They may be roused for a moment from dogmatic slumber, but soon wrap themselves round again with their prepossessions. But what is to prevent others

from divesting themselves of their sleeping garments and plunging bodily into the water? They may find heart and head braced by the immersion, preparatory to clothing themselves afresh suitably for active life, the life of body, soul, and spirit.

But the rationalism of principle is after all a comparatively rare phenomenon; and becoming rarer. Much more common is an involuntary and drifting scepticism, whether desponding or indifferent. Men do not sufficiently realise that they have a responsibility in regard to the government of assent.

It is a fact, recognised by psychologists and familiar to experience, that one may have power, to a certain limited extent, over his beliefs, indirectly at any rate. It is not merely that we are free to investigate or not to investigate, to hear or not to hear critical arguments and discussions, and so forth. Whether we do so or not depends of course largely upon accidental circumstances, and the results cannot always be foreseen. But the great point is, that the influences which determine conviction both immediately and ultimately are very largely extra-rational, and therefore controllable to a greater or less extent. Temperament (whether sanguine or melancholic, sceptical or credulous, etc.), prejudice and open-mindedness, bias of interest or affection, taste, emotions, habits of attention, active impulse, moral perceptions, in a word, character—all this

is plainly subject more or less to modification or direction by voluntary agency and effort. Nor need one be a psychologist in order to exercise this control. Every man's good sense will suggest to him naturally what courses are needful. The 'will to believe,' in persons little skilled in introspection, is generally accompanied by a good enough practical discernment of helps and hindrances. In religion especially there is a certain recognised discipline, variously modified by ecclesiastical sections and adaptable to the requirements of individuals. That such discipline has a natural efficacy with persons of any susceptibility is quite certain. That it may open the way to mysterious and strangely beneficent influences must be patent to unprejudiced observers.

That there is a practical and momentous alternative for every one in regard to some possible opinions at any rate is clear enough. There are for every one some beliefs or disbeliefs of importance to himself and to the human race, which may be either cultivated more or less successfully or weakened indefinitely, and perhaps entirely lost, by appropriate self-government or the neglect of it. How diverse, for example, are the views entertained by men of equal understanding, and with the same opportunities of judging, upon such questions as the value of human life, the desirableness of a state of marriage, the reality of human progress in virtue or happiness. Much

depends here upon one's voluntary attitude, as anyone can see. In regard to other questions the option may seem more doubtful; yet the fact is plain that in regard to speculative and supra-sensuous questions generally no one can set limits to his powers of believing in the future. The mental history of thoughtful people shows this abundantly. The most revolutionary and antecedently incredible changes are frequently experienced.

It were a most rash inference, because belief in the supra-sensuous may have been induced, or at any rate facilitated and encouraged, in many instances, by causes which are neither rational nor supernatural, that it is therefore wholly false and delusive. Such a conclusion would strike at the root of all natural knowledge whatsoever. For either we must suppose reason itself to be a product of blind forces in their nature and origin destitute of reason, or we must believe that there is a Providence which concerns itself in some wise in the making of human intellect, and why not, therefore, with our further spiritual development? That beliefs necessary for this development contain always an element of illusion is probable enough. Within the dark temple of our souls the light of heaven penetrates only through glass windows variously stained with the colours of imagination; yet brings with it life, health, and guidance enough for the performance of our worship and service.

Can a philosophy of voluntary belief have any constructive efficacy, any real influence upon the formation and development of a man's convictions? Well, it is true of course such a philosophy cannot produce convictions immediately; and its business is primarily, not to create new convictions, but to provide a *rationale* for those already entertained, or, if need be, to demonstrate their irrationality. None the less it may have also this secondary function, with persons unduly sceptical, viz. to change or modify their attitude, and thus to conduce indirectly to the strengthening of old beliefs and to pave the way for the reception of new ones at some future time. It is said, faith disappears as soon as its motive is detected: and that is true if one's doctrine be such as will not bear investigation. Hence possibly it may not be desirable that all, even of those who are competent, should philosophise; but only that those who do so should be enabled to get to the root of matters. But if the doctrine be agreeable to reason and contain nothing incredible, if the motive itself be such as we can deliberately approve, our faith must surely be strengthened, in the long run at any rate, and not jeopardised, by the discovery or clearer perception of its fundamental rationality, and we shall have attained, at the same time, intellectual satisfaction, self-knowledge, and inward unity, the harmony of thought and feeling. We shall be able, too, to give a reason to every man for the hope that is in us. On the other hand, if

the lifting of our eyelids find us in the outer darkness of scepticism, we shall none the less resort with an undivided heart and single mind to those legitimate means of conviction which experience has shown to be efficacious.

But this objection of alleged futility is after all merely the objection against moral philosophy in general, an objection the frivolousness of which is recognised by almost every one capable of philosophising. It is quite true, in general, that, practically, men are but little governed, at bottom, by reason. That is to say, reason is merely the instrument by which they effect particular ends: it does not determine fundamentally the course of their lives. Still it is absurd to suppose, because with the multitude reason is not paramount, that therefore it is wholly impotent or even wholly subordinate. Actually there is a large class in whom the understanding is of such predominating strength that they are able to conceive abstract ideas and principles with such force and definiteness as to regulate their lives to a great extent by that pattern; while even amongst the intellectual vulgar few minds are so dense as to be wholly impermeable by influences which percolate to them from those higher strata of thought. Now it is just the same with respect to the government of assent; the difference is only one of degree. The ethics of belief, that is to say, differs from the ethics of conduct only by being a little more recondite and more difficult of

application; and this ought to be considered as among the highest achievements of character, that a man's beliefs, no less than his actions, should be reduced into conformity with moral aims.

CHAPTER I

TRUTH

"We are all born in faith, and he who is blind follows blindly the irresistible attraction. He who sees follows by sight, and believes because he will believe."—FICHTE.

THE foundation of knowledge has been sought usually by philosophers in the shape of some one or more principles of indefectible certitude, or of an accumulation of particular evidences: vainly, as it would seem. No agreement has been arrived at; no definite conclusions established. That knowledge exists is generally admitted indeed. As to the nature of its intellectual basis, however, amongst this class, who alone have troubled to inquire into the matter, no sort of unanimity prevails. Actually there is no basis alleged for the sciences as a logical system, nor even for that common body of beliefs which serves for the guidance of ordinary conduct, the validity of which is not denied by probably at least half of those who investigate it. If there be principles underlying this knowledge whose self-evidence and indubitableness is recognised by a

majority, still it has to be admitted such principles are wholly inadequate to support the superstructure. The 'plain man' or common-sense student, accordingly, perplexed by this disagreement of doctors and bewildered by their labyrinthine reasonings, generally gives up the problem as, for him, insoluble or more curiously abstruse than practically important. He reverts to his original *Si non rogas intelligo*: a position, however, which no deeply thinking and logical mind can ever be satisfied with. Knowledge, you say, is certain, and yet its foundation is altogether dubious and indeterminate! That is a position, surely, which requires elucidating.

Meantime there is always a class of thinkers, truly emancipated and independent, according to whom knowledge is at bottom, as possessed by the multitude, merely blind and instinctive, and contains always, so far as it is really intelligent, a voluntary element. This view, long rejected, nay almost wholly ignored, by the great mass of students, seems just now to be at last rising into an increasing and permanent influence and authority.

Ordinary knowledge, for ordinary people, is of course something indubitable, though they can give no clear account of it. But this indubitableness unfortunately has a tendency to melt away and disappear so soon as it is closely investigated. Bias being excluded, it diminishes in proportion

to the development of the critical faculty :—reason, when employed critically, being like a candle, which consumes its own wax. The power of doubting, in minds sufficiently curious, penetrating, and passionless, is strictly unlimited. A philosopher of the type of Hume (an uncommon type fortunately)—who, as Professor T. H. Green says, "had neither any twist of vice nor any bias for doing good, but was a philosopher because he could not help it," through sheer love of investigation and delight in the acuteness of his faculties—such a philosopher finds out very soon the utter hollowness and inadequacy of all ultimate reasons and evidences whatsoever. Nor is the discovery, in such a mind, likely to be merely dialectical and ineffective. On the contrary, the sceptical conclusion may be realised with distressing clearness and forcefulness, at least in moments of reflection; and this mood, if indulged beyond a certain point (as of course it is not likely to be) might easily result in a degree of mental paralysis and permanent misery.

"The intense view of the manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. Where am I, or what? . . . I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, invironed with the deepest

darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty."[1]

That there are grounds for universal scepticism, if anyone should choose to rely upon them (though naturally few, comparatively, are disposed to admit the fact): this we think is as indisputable as anything can be. In stating briefly these grounds we may be accused of retailing philosophic platitudes or cheap sophisms; but this ought not to deter us if we are persuaded that the arguments in question are in truth unrefuted and from the nature of the case irrefutable, and at the same time that their consequences are very generally ignored or imperfectly realised. In those consequences there is nothing really dangerous or alarming. Fundamental scepticism, provided one does not purpose to rest in it, is always innocuous, the remedy being obvious and available for everyone.

The alleged ultimate sources of knowledge are, first, experience; secondly, intuition, or the immediate testimony of reason or other alleged faculty *a priori*.

Of experience, taken alone, the inadequacy must now be generally recognised. That this alone constitutes a valid and sufficient basis for know-

[1] *Treatise of Human Nature.* The present writer himself can testify to a similar experience, which cost him for a time considerable uneasiness, and was only dispelled, once for all, by an exertion of will. It is no doubt common enough—see, *e.g.*, Lowenfeld, *L. Tolstoi sein Leben, etc.*, quoted by Max Nordau, *Lügen der Civilisation*, 2nd edit. ii. iv.

ledge in general one would imagine that no well-informed and clear-headed investigator will any longer contend.

In the first place, experience is entirely subjective. We have no experience of anything external and permanent, but only of mental states or affections. Many still deny this, it is true; but the denial involves self-contradiction. Whatever we are conscious of is within consciousness: to say it is without is contradictory and absurd. You may say if you will, that in "external perception" consciousness projects itself momentarily into an outer world and thus in a manner envelopes and includes temporarily in itself what is at other times outside and always real and permanent, remaining there still in its place when consciousness is withdrawn from it. The assertion is possible without self-contradiction; but it is none the less, so far as any actual analysis of experience goes, baseless—not to mention that it is contradicted in great part by the accepted results of physical science. That the majority of men believe they are cognisant, in experience, of external realities is nothing to the purpose. Every person believes the same when he is dreaming. All we know is, that the object of perception is, at the moment when we perceive it, always within, and not external to, ourselves. This pad of paper, for example, whilst I am writing upon it, is present in my consciousness, white, smooth and firm: that is to say, I have a

sensation of whiteness, with certain others tactile and muscular. When I am absent, what remains of it? Whiteness we know is only in the mind: an effect, as science tells us, of ethereal undulations acting upon the retina and optic nerve. Science tells us that paper, and all matter, is for the most part empty (ethereal) space; it is space, occupied only in a military sense, so to speak, or garrisoned, by certain very active and inconceivably minute particles, termed electrons.[1] Philosophy tells us that space itself is or may be only a mode of our consciousness; and electrons or other ultimate particles or force-centres, things merely hypothetical, imagined or assumed in order to account for our sensations. Experience itself tells me simply that the paper, white, smooth and firm, exists momentarily in my consciousness whilst I am looking at it and scratching its surface with my pen; and ceases to exist, apparently, during the intervals. That something exists permanently indeed, we know not what, that is the cause of our sensations, and in virtue of which they will recur regularly under the requisite conditions, is not denied. But this is not matter

[1] Our point is merely that 'matter,' according to physical science, is not what it seems; the thing known to the plain man by this name, that which he sees and feels, being nothing but a congeries of purely *mental* phenomena. To this extent at least is physics anticipated by despised metaphysic.

As to 'force,' 'ether' into one or the other of which it is conjectured the ultimate corpuscles or 'electric charges' may be finally resolvable', such words are but symbols of the unknowable with which we make our calculations.

of experience, but of inference. The mere fact that our sensations recur regularly under certain conditions does not amount to an experience even of 'permanent possibilities.' This permanence is not experienced, but inferred: for experience does not tell us what has become of the objects of perception in the intervals when we are no longer sensibly aware of them, still less that they will always be perceptible, or ever again be perceptible, under the same conditions.

Experience is only of particular phenomena—sensations, emotions, thoughts, volitions—and of the particular relations which for the moment obtain amongst these. A law or principle cannot be learned from experience immediately, but must always be matter of inference by induction. Now the difficulty here is that every induction—and that is to say, all inferences from experience whatsoever—is grounded upon and presupposes the general principle of uniformity, as valid within the sphere of our investigations at any rate: but this principle, again, since every induction presupposes it, can never be proved from experience by induction. It follows that all inductive inferences whatsoever, both general and particular, considered from a purely empirical standpoint, are grounded upon a merely hypothetical principle, and that is to say, fundamentally vicious and invalid.

Observe, it is not merely that the principle of uniformity, the universal postulate of natural knowledge, cannot be rigorously demonstrated

upon grounds of experience. No conceivable human experience can provide for it even so much as the least basis of probability. In a world not already ascertained to be the theatre of law nothing can be calculated upon, nothing is either probable or improbable, nor can any previous experience of uniformity affect the question one iota. Do we point to results?[1] That is well enough—for the 'practical man,' and for the 'Pragmatist' or other faith-philosopher no less, as we shall see presently. But let us understand clearly the ground we stand upon. We are concerned for the moment, not with faith, but with experience, taken alone, as a basis of knowledge. Results, as soon as they have been obtained and noted, are themselves all in the past, matter of past experience like all the rest, and prove nothing as to the future. What warrant have we for supposing that the future will be conformable to the past, or the unknown to the known?

Imagine a man walking straight ahead in thick darkness through an unexplored country, of the extent and geographical features of which he is entirely ignorant. It is evident that the mere distance already traversed, and behind him, affords no reliable presumption of the continuity of *terra firma* in the direction in which he is

[1] It is thus that, *e. g.*, Professor Tyndall (*Fragments of Science*) refutes Mozley; and then clenches his argument by talking glibly of the "permanence of force" which is merely passing from *ignoratio elenchi* to *petitio principii*. Thus naively do scientists demolish the arguments of philosophers.

walking. At any moment he may come upon the seacoast and tumble over a cliff—not to mention rivers, pools, bogs, ravines, etc. : and the probability of this happening is unaffected by his having escaped hitherto. It is true this probability would be limited in any actual instance by the circumstance that the boundaries of seas, rivers, etc., may be assumed in general, for practical purposes, to form but a small part of the total surface of continents and even of islands. In other words the supposition of *complete* ignorance is here difficult to realise. This limitation apart, we have here nevertheless a true picture of human experience in general. From mere experience, that is to say, we know strictly nothing of future probability, past experience being in itself (apart from principles of interpretation, which cannot be derived logically from experience alone) simply no guide or indication at all as to what may be expected. At any moment we may be plunged into chaos, or enter upon an entirely new order of phenomena. That this chaos, or this new order of things, exists actually and is accessible to us, it is true, we have no knowledge ; but on the other hand we have no knowledge of the contrary. The continuance of the present order is at any moment neither probable nor improbable.

The principle of the uniformity of Nature is by no means self-evident to every one. It is true we seem to have a disposition or tendency,

very imperfectly regulated in most people, to expect or take for granted this uniformity in many instances, and to make inferences accordingly both as to past and future events and facts, both general and particular; and this tendency is variously explained and disputed about by philosophers and scientists. The position of Hume was, that it is simply the effect of habit, and unwarrantable. There is no ground of necessary connection[1] discoverable, said Hume,

[1] Some have imagined this causal *nexus* as simply identity or equivalence. Thus Hamilton (*Lectures on Metaphysics*): "An effect is nothing more than the sum or complement of all the partial causes, the concurrence of which constitutes its existence." A cause or sum of conditions is, then, equivalent to its effect; and, if this is true once it must be true always, according to the 'principle of identity' Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, Prolegomena). As to this we must observe first, that this alleged equivalence is never perceived immediately, else there were no causal sequence, but only a repetition of similar feelings. It has to be proved, therefore, in every instance. But for this proof a vast amount of knowledge is requisite, an order of nature being assumed, too, at every step in the argument. Not but what this identity, could we persuade ourselves, though it were only with the aid of an assumed uniformity, of its existence, would be of some value as tending to establish in belief an eternal continuance of the universal order thus postulated.

Difference is identity, according to Hegel, the magician of metaphysics. "The rain (the cause) and the wet the effect are the self-same existing water" *Logic*, tr. Wallace, cap. 8). Yes: that is to say, the *appearances* of rain-clouds, of rain falling, and of puddles in the street, are not the same at all; yet we, convinced beforehand of an order of nature, infer one constant molecular cause of these appearances, and call that water. But this identity of *matter* explains nothing. What has to be accounted for is the difference, the changes of *form*. To put forward as causal nexus this constancy of material, which provides no reason for the phenomenal changes, were no better than mystification surely.

in the successions of phenomena. The position of modern evolutionary science is, that the tendency, in its more simple and uncritical manifestations at any rate, is largely a consequence of ancestral experiences, or associations organised in the nervous system, whilst, in view of the indispensableness of such an aptitude, 'natural selection,' too, has obviously its influence. On the other hand, the position of Kant was, that judgments of causation, amongst others, are universal and necessary, for the very good and sufficient reason, as it appeared to him, that such judgments relate to laws of the mind itself. The mind, said Kant, makes its own experience out

In truth the supposed identity or equivalence of cause and effect is, if we mistake not, a figment, or at the best only a plausible assumption, of imagination. A hand contracts upon a full sponge "with an effect that is known." "Contraction in the hand, and in the sponge. Identity!" cries Dr. Hutcheson Stirling (*As Regards Protoplasm*). Yes, but how much of the total sequence is explained by that? A cannon-ball placed upon a cushion indents it. "Identity!" But the thing to be explained there is, amongst others, gravity. Even in chemical combinations, from which Sir William Hamilton takes some of his instances, the equivalance is, we imagine, never complete; not because "the translating force, perhaps the human hand" is absent from the effect—Mill was wrong here (*Examination of Hamilton's Philosophy*), for this force, wherever it be found subsequently, must be considered as part of the total effect but because the qualities or properties of substances have to be accounted for. "It is events," says Mill—the greatest because the truest and clearest of English nineteenth century thinkers, despite his limitations—"events, that is to say, changes, not substances, that are subject to the law of causation." The causation has nothing to do with the identity; "it is the change of form which alone we seek a cause for," and in regard to uniformity, what has to be proved is that these changes have an invariable order.

of materials which sense furnishes. It contributes, that is to say, all that is 'formal' or intelligible in experience; and is entitled therefore to universal judgments in regard to its own processes. Later exponents of this Idealism have been usually more thorough-going. The materials of sense vanish altogether. Things, as perceived and cognised by us, are constituted solely of relations, and these are "the work of the mind"—pure creations of that ego which is but a mode or manifestation of the eternally self-realising spiritual principle, or Absolute.

Of these Kantian and 'neo-Kantian' interpretations of experience it must suffice to remark here, that they are not founded immediately upon any unimpeachable analysis, such as anyone may verify by introspection. Analysis tells us that the actual phenomena of experience, being elements of consciousness, are all alike mental; but as to the origin or determination of them, experience tells us nothing immediately. To say, for example, that the relations of redness to whiteness, to colourlessness, to the conditions which produce redness, are not passively apprehended, but *imposed* by the understanding, seems unwarrantable by direct introspection, and requires justification. Much more, to say that an object cannot be perceived or thought of except as related, may be perfectly correct; but to say that relations are the only element in what is perceived, is perfectly gratuitous. Redness in itself

as a sensation pure and simple, is something—so at least it seems to most of us—and its relations to whiteness, etc., depend apparently upon this something, or, if not, we cannot tell what they depend upon. Moreover, even granting that experience is "the work of the mind," still this proves nothing as to any supposed invariableness or necessity in its processes.

Let those who will wander amid the high cloud-lands of Transcendentalism or the scarcely less misty lowlands of 'psychogenetical' theory. All such speculations, though perfectly legitimate and even highly praiseworthy, are obviously useless for purposes of fundamental epistemology, or can have only a negative value. That is to say, whatever results may be derived from them, such results, however satisfactory to many as speculations of abstruse metaphysics or science, cannot properly be employed constructively as a basis of elementary knowledge. To ground knowledge, a thing so clear and indisputable, upon conclusions often mutually conflicting, and, as it seems, problematical, grounded themselves, moreover, in any case, upon processes of argument which pre-suppose, at the very least, so much of that very knowledge which is in question—what can be more absurd?

Experience, we have seen, without principles of interpretation is entirely barren and useless; and on the other hand such principles cannot themselves be derived logically from any mere

experience. From experience one can know only particulars, subjective and fleeting, without significance, like clouds passing in the void. He knows nothing eternal, nothing permanent, nothing real, but only the flux of his own thoughts and feelings, with what of continuity, regularity, and unity or, 'personal identity' he can discover therein. He cannot even supplement or eke out this experience with the reported and cumulative experience of other people—not that this could help him very much in any case—for those seeming associates and fellow-creatures too, so far as experience takes him, may be only the phantasms of a prolonged and orderly dream, simulating reality by coherent and intelligible speech, action, and writing.

With regard to fundamental beliefs in general, speculations as to their origin and authority, as we have seen, can add nothing to their certainty, and the question reduces itself, for each one of us, to this simple alternative: Are the principles in question, or are they not, self-evident and indubitable? But to this again the reply is: That depends really upon whether or not one has inquired dispassionately into their origin and authority. There is reason to think positively that any such inquiry, in so far as it is really dispassionate and intelligent, not only does actually, but always must, tend to scepticism. In the first place there is the fact, plain and irreversible if anything is so, that my belief in a

proposition, however confident, is not in itself any guarantee of the truth of that proposition. It is in vain that I attribute this belief to 'Reason,' 'intuition,' and the like. The authority and infallibility of these 'faculties' has to be made clear, otherwise we are simply paying ourselves with words. But this again cannot be even attempted without plunging into abstruse science and still more abstruse metaphysics and theology, of which the results, when considered dispassionately, and from a purely rational standpoint, can never be free from uncertainty. To consider merely the scientific question of 'psychogenetical' origin—the question whether the forces of nature, so imperfectly ascertained, so infinitely diverse in their combinations, and acting through incalculable ages, might or might not be competent to produce, 'blindly' perhaps and without design, that feeling of the universal or necessary truth of a proposition:—who shall decide this in the negative without presumption? That the attempts which have been made actually to trace the origination of this feeling are not without a certain plausibility, who will deny? And if our convictions are in truth the product of blind forces, or even of genuine ancestral experiences rightly or wrongly interpreted, what assurance have we of their trustworthiness?

But it is not merely that the fundamental beliefs of individuals are liable to be questioned

and shaken just in proportion to their curiosity, intelligence, and impartiality. Such beliefs are in any case, for the most part, insufficient and wholly inadequate for the purposes of scientific logic.

"The scientific belief which, with least impropriety, may be termed the sole guarantee of our reasoning, is that belief in the uniformity of Nature which is equivalent to a belief in universal causation, which again is equivalent to a belief that similar antecedents are followed by similar consequents."[1]

Now, as we have said, this belief is not generally considered self-evident. That the vast majority of unscientific and many scientific persons do not even hold it in its entirety is well ascertained, and of those who hold it it is pretty certain that the majority do so (however illogically) upon grounds of general experience and authority. In other words, this belief, which

[1] Arthur Balfour, *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*. Actually the principle, to cover everything, would have to be made much more comprehensive. The Law of Causation—that every event must have a cause—is treated usually as distinct from that of Uniformity. Of these the former is regarded by the Intuitionalist school as a self-evident or 'necessary truth.' The status of the latter is more dubious: it is excluded from necessary truth, *e.g.*, by such a writer as Mansel. Both principles, curiously enough, are treated very generally by this school as inapplicable to the sphere of 'Free-will.' Both, confessedly, are dependent for their full recognition upon scientific culture.

The truth is plainly that the belief in uniformity is a natural tendency which, with cultivation, may or may not become a conviction of its universality and necessity. Whether it does so or not depends upon one's temperament and point of view generally.

is the logically indispensable basis of all others, is not a fundamental belief at all, much less is it indubitable. It is the widest generalisation of science and, if one must consider it dispassionately, utterly illogical and unwarrantable.

Dispassionately considered, the notion of indubitable principles is an illusion. Irresistible beliefs, irresistible, that is, for individuals and for the time being, there may be indeed; but such beliefs, even when common to the human race, have proved false in notorious instances, and in each and every instance may turn out to be in the long run, for the philosophic intellect, not irresistible at all. It is just as easy to question and, if the critical faculty be strongly developed in us, just as easy to doubt (though not wholly to disbelieve) any one principle, any one faculty, as another; and a man has not attained to the acme of what is possible in this respect unless he has learned at certain moments to doubt even his own past experience in general, even memory itself—this also being, not immediate, but mediate, or, as Sir William Hamilton expressed it, "phenomenal" perception: perception, that is, not of the contents of any bygone experience immediately, but only of present thoughts or imaginations *believed* to be representative of such experience.

Huxley says somewhere: "The man who has once mastered the first elements of philosophy knows that nothing is indubitably certain save the immediate consciousness or feeling of the present

moment." But if nothing is certain, it follows surely in strict logic that nothing is even probable, except in a purely subjective sense. Probability, if it be not wholly subjective and consequently, from a dispassionate standpoint, invalid and illusory, must be deducible, whether immediately or ultimately, from a prior certainty. Thus, for example, if I know that in the long run all throws of dice are equal in number, I can infer that the probability of any particular throw occurring first is one in thirty-six, and that if I act consistently upon that assumption I shall not be led astray. But a probability not deducible from a prior certainty means simply a disposition in the mind to believe something, and is entirely destitute of objective validity.

The outcome of scepticism is mainly a matter of temperament. It may be considered as a stream with stepping stones to a better philosophy. All earnest and aspiring spirits find these stones and make use of them; but others come merely for recreation, and after swimming for a while in the deeper parts of the stream return to sun themselves in the pleasant meadows of Epicureanism. "In all the incidents of life," said Hume, "we ought still to preserve our scepticism. If we believe that fire warms, or water refreshes, 'tis only because it costs us too much pains to think otherwise. Nay, if we are philosophers, it ought to be only upon rational principles, and

from an inclination which we feel to the employing ourselves after that manner." He then declares frankly that, for his part, he is moved merely by curiosity, by uneasiness at the learned world's "deplorable ignorance" of a philosophy which he could hardly suppose to be either useful or edifying, and by the love of fame.

But this attitude of indifferentism is really inconsequent. This *application* of mere incertitude is quite uncalled for—as if one had gone into that stream without first stripping himself and emerged with wet garments. Philosophic scepticism is not the destruction of belief, but only an occasional and temporary weakening of it during moments of reflection; for, just as no sensible person will stay too long in the water for fear of cramp and other inconveniences, so no one thinks of cultivating incertitude beyond a point where it becomes positively troublesome and uncomfortable. It is just the same in speculation as in action; where knowledge is wholly wanting, belief, though enfeebled and merely partial, may be still a sufficient inducement and basis of obligation. In scientific and practical questions the obligation is often to continued scepticism or suspension of judgment. To universal scepticism, however, there can be no obligation. There is neither worth, nor beauty, nor sacredness in truth where this means simply the absence of all conviction; but on the contrary, so long as a man has still beliefs—and no one is altogether without them—it behoves him to have

serious purposes and to apply himself strenuously to the advancement of such purposes, and with that end to the confirming and, if need be, the supplementing of such belief as remains to him. Doubt is enervating and weakens our sense of the value and attainableness of noble ends; but that is not a reason for abandoning such ends, but for getting rid of doubt—just as a man is not justified, *e.g.*, in lying in bed while his aged father is murdered by house-breakers merely because he thinks there is an even chance that they will not kill him after all. Callous indifference to the soul's higher interests were only condonable if one had come to regard life as he regards a picture or a stage performance, as something purely fictitious and imaginary, and from an entirely detached standpoint — a predicament, fortunately, which is as unattainable as it is undesirable.

Here indeed it seems to us that we probe the heart of the matter, the ever living core of true philosophy. Experience, let us grant, may be a dream; nevertheless this dream, while it lasts, is of some consequence, and the only thing that can be of any consequence to us; and it is a part of this dream that we ourselves can influence the development of it, not merely by our actions, but just as much through our convictions. Suppose for a moment that knowledge is, as such, discredited. Belief remains, never wholly destroyed —so at least it seems to us, which is the same

thing for the present argument. The springs and motives of action and of thought consequently remain intact. The impulse to philosophise remains. Belief urges us to find a philosophy that we can live by, and such as may satisfy as far as possible our intellectual aspirations. Curiosity itself remains; though it be only a curiosity about the implications of what, for the time being, seems uncertain to us. For it by no means follows, because we have given up the hope of objective certainty, that we must despair of truth altogether. On the contrary, just so far as we still retain belief of any kind, we have still that degree of assurance that we have truth in our possession, notwithstanding our recognition that this assurance is simply a trust, partly instinctive and partly voluntary, as it seems. We have still this glorious inheritance of faith, subject in great part indirectly to our own control, to improve, cultivate, and exploit by every possible means, according to the utmost limit of our resources.

The motives of speculation, of whatever kind, grow out of and imply certain beliefs (knowledge they do not necessarily imply) as already existing: for example, the belief in one's own experience as of a certain generally uniform character at any rate, and in the continuance of this experience for an indefinite period. Philosophy, accordingly, takes these beliefs for granted at the outset; not, however, in the first instance, as final, but only as hypothetical and provisional. Starting then from

this standpoint—the only standpoint which, for the time being, as sceptical thinkers but still men, concerns us in the least—we find that, as it seems, the beliefs in question are better adapted to our purposes both practical and speculative if held without reservation or questioning; that doubt of them if indulged in is devastating, saddening, and paralysing to effective action and speculation alike. We find the beliefs in question developing, at once by the inexhaustible richness of their implications and by the constant assimilation of new material, into a vast aggregate thoroughly satisfying as far as it goes, by its coherency, its infinite variety and suggestiveness, to the intellect and the imagination. In the assurance now returning and increasing of the existence of the world as a permanent system of potentialities for the harmonious generation of experience, and of the real existence of human beings participating with us in this experience and of like passions with ourselves; in the irresistible suggestion of a transcendent and super-personal Power or Substance, whether partly identical with or merely operating through the forces both of matter and spirit, we have already a certain indispensable basis, however inadequate, for that life, active, contemplative, and passional for which we find in ourselves the aspiration and the capacity.

"But we accept knowledge for no other reason than this, that it seems to us to be the truth." Be it so. They that are whole need not the

physician. To believe a proposition, with whatever degree of assurance, is so far (as we have seen) to believe the truth of that proposition; and this truth, real or apparent, must always present itself to us as amongst the most noble and attractive features of the doctrine. But the sceptic is in this position, that he has begun actually to doubt, in moments of reflection—the very moments of brooding or incubation upon philosophy—whether he is in possession of truth at all. Now the mere fact that he still partly believes, because as it seems nature obliges him in despite of reasoning, is not in itself any reason why he should aim at believing implicitly. He may indeed cherish the hypotheses in question as what, for him, are most like truth, but always with reservation; and in the interests of pure "truth for truth's sake" he ought rather to suspend his judgment until clear proof presents itself. But if the health of one's soul and the safety of his body be implicated in the matter, or seem to be implicated, that is sufficient reason for assent without reservation; for these exigencies do not admit of suspense or hesitation. And it happens fortunately that full and undisturbed conviction returns upon us constantly so soon as we give up investigating the grounds of it—as a piece of elastic which had been stretched and liable to snap returns an hundred times, when relaxed, to its original thickness.

Belief, then, is not grounded upon knowledge,

but knowledge upon belief, according to an old paradox. But no reasonable person can reject knowledge merely on this account, unless he is prepared for the like reason to reject belief also and give up all attempt to regulate his conduct in accordance with reason.

A mind truly critical and logical has always an option of doubting; but determines itself in favour of belief voluntarily, the logical faculty or reason both grounding itself upon and co-operating with nature. From this union of reason and nature, then, philosophy is born: reason itself, however, being at least partly a product of nature, as Eve was moulded from the rib of Adam. That is to say, knowledge, as philosophical, is grounded naturally, indeed, upon tendencies impressed ante-natally, as it is supposed, and strengthened by experience and education; but rationally also upon a recognition of bodily and spiritual necessities as these appear to 'common sense,'—which again, however, it has to be admitted, is merely the result of the aforesaid tendencies. Not indeed that one need deny the title of knowledge to convictions of the unphilosophical multitude, which, though purely instinctive, are yet, as we hold, none the less true and certain. But knowledge, which for the ordinary man is mere instinctive and apparently inevitable belief, becomes philosophy for the man of critical reflection through being approved by reason; that which is added, however, being not

any theoretical certainty or probability, but only a certain voluntary element, the result of reflection.

The methods of observation, experiment, and reasoning which we call common-sense methods, by which every man of sense guides himself in practical affairs; these, it is well understood, are the same precisely by which, being applied systematically, what are called the natural sciences have been elaborated: an aggregate increasing in progressive ratio, of ever-increasing usefulness for human necessities and conveniences, so vast as to be incomprehensible by any single intellect, yet consistent in all its parts, and to which in general all experience is found to be conformable, notwithstanding many apparent exceptions. Nature, in short, is found to be a harmony, and her long secular evolution an harmonious unfolding from the earliest birth of solar systems, or still earlier, as it would seem. The experiments of natural philosophers, the abstruse computations of mathematicians, the introspection of psychologists, the authentic records of writers, the excavations of archæologists, the reports of remote countries and races, the forms of speech and traditional observances and customs, the indications of the stratified rocks, etc., etc.: all tell a tale congruous with itself, or of ever-increasing congruity. Only a few obscure phenomena must be excepted, which, however incompatible with the 'natural order, are at least not altogether

without indications of a more recondite or remoter order to which ultimately they too may all be found conformable.

A merely temporal and precarious uniformity, however, will not content us. We should live upon it, so to speak, from hand to mouth only. We must be delivered once for all from the fear of chaos, and all doubts as to the ultimate unity, intelligibility, and trustworthiness of all phenomena both natural and spiritual. The imagination tends naturally towards universality and necessity, and we willingly avail ourselves of this tendency. Two and two make four, we are persuaded, even in a transcendental world.

The eternal principles, we are sure, are such as they are independently of their particular manifestation. Emanating from the Divine Substance at the heart of the universe their rays interpenetrate all the phenomena of mind and matter, perhaps also of countless modes of existence not manifested hitherto in our experience. From of old they have illuminated our path. Like the sunshine they are all about us: from them our life derives, our growth and hope, all our stability. They surely are the most real of all things, since the nature of all other things is conditioned, perhaps entirely determined by them. God Himself cannot change them: or rather, we may say, they are themselves parts of God, inherent somehow in the very nature of the Absolute Being.

So that we seem to hear with a new force that saying : *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

Love of truth itself compels us to admit that truth has to be taken entirely upon trust. And it is far more satisfactory surely to acknowledge this once for all, and not to go on refuting scepticism ineffectually by evasions, misapprehensions, and question-begging deductions, but effectually, by exhibiting it in its true light, not as a fallacious or sophistical mode of reasoning, but as an apostacy from nature [1] which brings its own punishment, a perverse kind of intellectual suicide entirely destitute of advantage or merit.

Recognising, now, that what is commonly called knowledge is differentiated from all other beliefs not, in the last resort, by any superior cogency of evidences, but only by its being generally accepted and obviously indispensable to every one, the unjustifiableness and inconsistency is at once apparent of a voluntarily imposed and cultivated 'agnosticism' which would confine belief rigorously to the established results of scientific method. It is true our loyalty to this method remains only confirmed by the discovery

[1] "How shameful is this ! that a man having received from Nature measures and canons for the recognition of truth, should study not to add to them and perfect them where they are wanting, but the very contrary of this ; if there be anything that may lead us to the knowledge of the truth, they strive to abolish and destroy it." Epictetus thus denounces (*Dissertations*, II. cap. 20) the Academic sceptics, along with the egoistic and atheistic Epicureans, as guilty of a like kind of perversity.

of its true basis; but it is quite another matter to deny the rationality of all other faiths. In truth the mere fact that nature, by whatever means or processes, has led us to the belief or knowledge of what is immediately and unmistakably necessary for us to believe or know, is a fact so astounding that it ought to inspire us with some confidence in other sources of salutary conviction. Nature, indeed, in providing for our instruction and edification, does not confine itself to any one method.

Nature, or Supernature, when she would lead a man to the belief or knowledge of what is beyond the reach of the senses and the understanding, first sows in his breast a longing, more or less conscious, for the thing in question; and then brings it about, whether by a purely 'natural' reaction and growth or by the aid of some transcendent infusion, that this longing sooner or later produces a conviction of the reality of its object.

As Kant has said, it is not necessary that the existence of God should be demonstrated, but only that men should become convinced of it. Nor can anyone say that conviction upon such a question is for him unattainable. To many indeed it may be only attainable after lifelong purification and discipline. That the will, in these matters, may be profoundly influential, is generally understood and admitted. As in other matters, so in matters of the intellect: in

what concerns our bodily preservation and growth nature impels us by instinct, for the most part irresistibly; but so soon as there is a question of our moral and spiritual development the co-operation of the will becomes generally indispensable, for the reason probably that this development of our voluntary nature is itself an important element in the end aimed at. For so it is, as the goddess of Virtue told Hercules in the fable, that there is nothing truly valuable that can be purchased without pains and labour.

"But the teaching of emotion and 'intuition' is often demonstrably incompatible with the plain testimony of experience and reason." True: and the scientific intellect in such cases will always prefer the latter and reject the former. But, supposing for the moment that 'experience' alone, as interpreted by reason, is an index of truth, still it does not follow that we ought not to stick to what is useful when knowledge is unattainable. But the presumption is that nature will teach us in the long run not only what is useful but what is true also, or approximates more and more nearly to the truth. Reason too and experience (be it remembered), are products of nature, or of what is behind and above nature; and since it is but a very small portion comparatively of the knowledge acquired through those means that is requisite for material necessities, there is so far a presumption that the Higher Powers are concerned not only for the preserva-

tion but also for the enlightenment of our species. Meantime it has yet to be shown that any doctrine permanently useful to mankind has ever proved false : what have proved false are certain doctrines of priests, sectaries, and mystics, certain forms and phases of dogma and fancy, the utility of which will be found in every case to have been merely relative and temporary.

The question of the government of assent is always at bottom an ethical question, and determinable by reason. In practice, however, this kind of discipline is subject to the peculiar difficulty that it tends to become less efficacious in proportion as it is consciously exercised. Eros takes wing when Psyche lights her lamp. So that it may often be well to content oneself with counsels of imperfection. It is pretty evident that the extra-beliefs of individuals, as often as they are living convictions, and however little intellectually defensible, are adapted more or less approximately to the requirements of their particular natures and circumstances.

It might be thought, the scientific method at any rate, having been accepted by every one at least implicitly (since it is, as we have seen, nothing else than the method of common sense, systematically applied) as a test of truth, its results are binding upon every one henceforth irrespectively of consequences. Rather they are the common inheritance of humanity, in which all may share according to their capacity and

opportunity. But science is not indispensable, except for those who have imbibed the spirit of science. As a fact the great majority have so little appreciation of the intrinsic value of knowledge and intellectual harmony that it is really of comparatively small consequence for them that their opinions should be conformable to the teaching of science. Of what use to possess truth if they do not love it? But the affections, the æsthetic sensibilities, the instincts of piety and veneration, in comparatively illogical or intellectually incurious natures, are capable usually of considerable development. The instinct of such persons in clinging to what is most helpful for them may be trusted usually to a great extent. Moreover, it is certain that all moral nutriment must contain at least an element of truth which, like certain beneficent salts or mineral matter in fruits and vegetables, may be the more easily assimilated in that combination.

Science meantime must go on her way untrammelled, though particular conclusions need not be pressed home to individuals. We who have learned to regard this method, faithfully applied, as the most certain guide to truth and reality, shall not hesitate to apply this test wherever applicable with all the impartiality of which we are capable. It is conceivable that we may have to choose one day between essential ingredients of our faith and the plain testimony of reason; but it ought to be an article of faith

with us that we shall never find ourselves in such a predicament. That this excellent instrument wherewith boon Nature has furnished us as a key to unlock certain of her mysteries, which we in filial piety have perfected for ourselves, can never mislead us or admit us to the knowledge of anything harmful; nay, that there is nothing really harmful to be known. This persuasion, and the further latent anticipation — far more difficult to justify—that sooner or later we shall know positively by this method all that is really needful for us, is at the bottom of much Agnostic renunciation;[1] and is the only thing that could even seem for a moment to justify such renunciation. But it is obvious that in both these assumptions we are going far beyond what is warranted by the method itself.

[1] Thus the ingenuous Romanes (in his sceptical period), having demolished Theism as an hypothesis scientifically probable, declares with more pathos than logic, that henceforth it must be his obvious duty "to stifle all belief of the kind which he conceives to be the noblest, and to discipline his intellect with regard to this matter into an attitude of purest scepticism." For him henceforth the soul of loveliness gone from the universe, existence a "lonely mystery," the "sharpest pangs of which his nature is susceptible"; for him, and presumably for others, "the ruination of individual happiness," the precept *know thyself* "transformed into the terrific oracle to Œdipus—

'Mayest thou ne'er know the truth of what thou art.'"

Nevertheless hope lurks at the bottom of this Pandora's box. "Truth," he is convinced, "must in the end be the most profitable for the race." How profitable, if it brings nothing but despair, if it be itself nothing but a "lonely mystery"? Exclusive allegiance to scientific evidence indeed presupposes, in a rational mind, faith in something higher than such evidence, viz. in truth not merely as knowable, but as ultimately worth knowing.

"On se fait une idole de la vérité même; car la vérité hors de la charité n'est pas Dieu." Intellectual impartiality, if this were to entail upon humanity the sacrifice of its well-being and birthright, were an idolatry pure and simple. Truth, separated from Love and Beauty, is no longer Truth, but her image, as inadequate to the reality as any Pagan symbol: which moreover may easily be shattered in pieces at a blow. That the real nature of things is neither hostile nor indifferent to spiritual interests we are bound to believe; and the very existence of knowledge is but the first of many intimations which point clearly to this. It is just because Truth shows herself to us as inseparable from the Good and the Beautiful that this trinity is to be worshipped of every clear-thinking person.

CHAPTER II

VIRTUE

"Jesus said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"—MATT. xxii. 37–40.

MANY persons are conscious of intuitions, all of sentiments, in regard to the moral conduct of life, its aims and obligations; but these sentiments and intuitions are of different degrees of force and authority, while their character or content varies indefinitely in different individuals, societies, communities, and epochs. The question constantly arises therefore, whether there be any permanent or absolute morality, to which all should conform, or whether any sure and sufficient basis can be found for morality in general.

The desires of men are infinitely various; but one thing all desire naturally in common, that is pleasure, in one form or another, which in its more complete and lasting manifestations is called happiness, and in its more exalted and spiritual forms joy, blessedness, ecstasy. It is true this is by no means the sole object of desire with anyone;

nor with many is it even the supreme object, or that which most engrosses their thoughts. But it was pointed out by Aristotle that happiness alone is distinguished from all other things in that it is never (we should rather say, seldom) desired as a means to other things, but always for its own sake. Aristotle indeed distinguishes happiness (εὐδαιμονία) from pleasure (ἡδονή) as different in kind, and tells us that the latter is desired with a view to the former. But happiness, as the term is most generally understood, is nothing else than a state of permanent pleasure or satisfaction consciously realized: and it is just this which in fact every one naturally aspires to for its own sake, every one at least who is capable of forming clear general conceptions. It is found, too, that while many other things are desired apart from any immediate consideration of pleasure, and are even preferred to this, yet that invariably such objects as yield no gratification either in the attainment or pursuit of them, and through the attainment of which no pleasure is ultimately to be anticipated, are desired no longer and abandoned as unworthy of consideration so soon as the fact is discovered—unless indeed where one is drawn after them irresistibly by the chains of habit or of hopeless and insane craving for what was formerly pleasurable, though it is so no longer: a condition which is regarded always, even by the subject himself, as something unfortunate and lamentable.

To make this plainer let us consider one or two apparent exceptions. Why is it that men are so solicitous for their name and fame after death? The great majority wish to survive at least in the memory of a few friends, and are particularly anxious to leave behind them a good reputation; whilst a man of genius will toil all his lifetime and climb higher than his contemporaries to light a tower whose flame to them can never be visible through the intervening rocks above them. The explanation is not difficult. In the first place the motive is never unmixed with others, else it were powerless. *Labor ipse voluptas*: no one, for example,—setting aside for the moment any possible motive of philanthropy, which too of course brings its own pleasures,—no one would write books for publication by his executors unless the writing of them were, to some extent, an occasion of present solace and delight. But secondly, the aspiration itself may be hedonistically interpreted. Admiration is not like incense, which must be *smelt*: it is sufficient that it be realised in the imagination, though there is of course always an additional pleasure to a man not excessively modest from the actual words and looks of his admirers. We are here, then, to a great extent independent of place, and to a less degree even of time. We derive pleasure from the imagined thoughts of men in distant countries, and why not also in remote ages? Moreover, it is at least doubtful

to most of us whether death means really the extinction of consciousness: whether some rays of terrestrial glory might not dawn upon us from over the horizon of the hereafter. It is probable that the idea of personal annihilation, being contrary to all experience, is seldom fully realised even by the most habitually materialistic thinkers; that some vague feeling always remains of participation in the life of posterity. But in any case there is always the present consciousness of a man's own enhanced dignity and grandeur as it appears to himself—a very continuous and considerable source of gratification, as it must be confessed. And finally, in so far as it is recognised that the reward is inadequate, the love of posthumous fame is still cultivated and encouraged for its stimulating effects.

We desire admiration, as we do objects in general, at first for the pleasure which it gives us, afterwards, by the well-known 'law of transference,' for its own sake. Now, so soon as we have forgotten the pleasure, and seek the object for itself, the accidental conditions of time and place lose their importance, and the thing itself only is thought of. But this forgetfulness could never be sustained, were it not that it is both continuously reinforced by new pleasurable feelings and generally approved and encouraged from a hedonistic standpoint, as we have seen.

So again, when a man prefers truth, or what seems to be truth, to personal happiness—

for example, when George Romanes, having "candidly examined" and demolished that Theism which was the glory and sweetness of his life, and, conscious still of impulses to religious faith, resolves to stifle these latter, and to "discipline his intellect into an attitude of purest scepticism"—it may be taken for granted that the pursuit of knowledge has been for him, and may still be, amongst the greatest and most constant occasions of delight and consolation: otherwise that devotion, though disinterested, could never have been possible. Here, again, too, there is the strong motive of pride, with the massive though sombre gratification which still remains for this passion.

> "It fortifies my soul to know
> That, though I perish, Truth is so."[1]

—Yes, but what fortifies him is just this delight in the contemplation of Truth, and of his own exalted relationship to it.

Mankind, then, naturally desire pleasure, or happiness, and in the long run desire nothing else but this, and such things as either in the pursuit or the attainment are sources or occasions of it. There can be no question as to whether this ought to be so, or whether it is reasonable. The fact is basal and unchangeable: pleasure or happiness, or something which, as it is believed, conduces to happiness or diminishes unhappiness, whether temporarily or permanently, whether in

[1] Arthur Hugh Clough.

this present world or in another, is the end of conduct and the goal of aspiration. If this be disputed the appeal is to experience, which testifies plainly that even though individuals may occasionally depart from this norm, or imagine themselves to depart from it, mankind is constant to it in the long run, and regards all such exceptional individuals as cast away upon shores of barrenness. Once more, let us not be misunderstood. Desire is not always for pleasure. Disinterestedness too is a fact, and the greatest of all facts, to deny which is the lowest and most benighted form of atheism; but none the less pleasure (or pain) experienced or anticipated, if it be not in every case that which originates desire (which is perhaps not so certain), yet certainly it is, normally at least, what sustains it, that which it feeds upon, without which in the course of nature it must languish and ultimately cannot subsist.

Further, it is observable that in general the desirableness of other things as estimated by thoughtful people is very much in proportion to their estimated or recognised value as conducing in one way or another to happiness in the long run and upon the whole.

We hear much nowadays of what is called the "fundamental fallacy of Hedonism." It is said, in effect: If 'good' be equivalent to pleasure or happiness, then it follows that "pushpin is as good as poetry,"—or say rather, that pleasures of

the senses are as good as those of the intellect, the imagination and the affections, if only they can equal them in intensity and permanence; but it is generally admitted that the latter are more excellent than the former, even when *not* superior in intensity and permanence. Hence, it is argued, the theory is certainly wrong which would identify good with pleasure. Now as to this, we are very far from saying here that good is simply pleasure or happiness. Such a doctrine we hold to be debasing in the extreme. If 'good' be equivalent to desirable, our position is, that many things other than pleasure are good, and none the less so because it is by 'transference' only that their quality first comes to be felt. What we affirm is, not that happiness alone is good, but only, that according to the permanent standard of human nature things are good or desirable in proportion as they conduce to happiness, directly or indirectly. This we think is undeniable, and against such a position the objection above stated is inapplicable. There are higher and lower pleasures, it is true, and the higher are better or more desirable even when not greater in quantity. Stuart Mill accordingly, as the representative of Utilitarianism, admitted a difference of quality in pleasures, and the admission was seized upon as a virtual cession of his own fundamental standpoint. And it is very true, that the recognition that certain kinds of pleasures are more desirable, or more worthy

of desire, than certain other kinds, irrespectively of quantity, is virtually a recognition that something else is desirable besides pleasures. But on the other hand, we think that in any such comparison of pleasures, if not the particular experiences be alone regarded but the total effects upon the mind, it will be seen that the superiority of quality, though not directly resolvable into one of quantity, yet carries this with it, broadly speaking, as a necessary consequence. It is not merely that the higher pleasures are reproductive and lead on to others of the same kind, while those of the senses are necessarily limited or exhausting. There is added further a degree of exaltation and satisfaction in proportion as we find ourselves able to enjoy and appreciate these higher pleasures; and this satisfaction, if not always very prominent or acute, is at least permanent, and pervades consciousness to such an extent that it becomes indispensable to us: for no one can be happy without self-esteem. If we consider what it is which makes the difference of quality in pleasures, we shall find that it consists chiefly and especially in the presence or absence of the elements of admiration and disinterested love. These elements, though themselves pleasureable, are not necessarily more intensely so than any merely sensuous feeling—though undeniably their capabilities in this respect too are, in rich natures, indefinitely greater—but they are attended by more or less of gladness because, when

we find ourselves the vehicles of them, we are exalted more or less in our own estimation. For there is always in the mind of man something of exaltation and gladness when he is conscious that he is, as we say, 'taken out of himself,' and it is in this more especially that he becomes aware of his true dignity as midway between the brutes and the angels: and on the other hand, any considerable indulgence in merely animal pleasures is generally followed, in refined natures, by more or less of disgust and remorse. It follows that all who have adequately experienced them will always prefer those enjoyments in which the elements of love and admiration are present, not merely on account of their productivity and their greater possibilities in respect of intensity and permanence, but more especially with a view to self-respect, which is a most important and indispensable element in permanent happiness. But then, again, on the other hand, this very self-gratulation or secondary exaltation, evidently, is not the cause, but the consequence of certain forms of enjoyment being regarded as more desirable or admirable than others, irrespectively of quantity. The difference of quality is pre-supposed: and that means, that something else is desirable besides agreeableness of feeling.

It were an unwarrantable inference to suppose, because nothing is desired permanently that does not produce pleasure, that pleasure alone is

ultimately desirable. This is no accident, but an eternal and supreme consequence of Nature's working, that three things especially, namely, truth, beauty, moral goodness, are desired by the more earnest of their votaries and held to be for ever desirable more than any form of pleasure. True, each of these is productive of pleasure in many ways and in the highest degree; but it is not this pleasure alone that is desired, but the things themselves for their own sake in the various forms of their manifestation. It is nothing to the purpose that originally this was not so, nor even that it could not continue to be so if the things in question could by any possibility become no longer productive of pleasure. For the truth is that those things will eternally produce pleasure and will eternally be desirable, if only for that reason.

There is but one criterion of desirableness, and that is the verdict of discriminating persons founded upon a careful scrutiny of their own consciousness. That verdict unfortunately is at present far from unanimous, except to this extent, that happiness is regarded universally as desirable, and other things mainly in proportion as they conduce to happiness. Still this does not warrant us in considering happiness alone as the *summum bonum*: for there are always many to whom certain other things seem preferable—though on the other hand, it has to be acknowledged that those particular things are generally to the

individuals respectively concerned either the greatest or the most indispensable means to happiness, or to the avoidance of unhappiness. Thus some prefer fame, honour, the society of a mistress, the aggrandisement of church or country, and so forth: but of these desiderata the majority have little or no pretention to universality. Of universal ends three only can pretend to compete for supremacy with happiness, namely, those already mentioned, and of these only the last named as universal. For while there are always enthusiasts who prefer the interests of knowledge or of their conceptions of art to those of happiness, this is certainly not approved by the generality, except so far as it is the happiness of those individuals only that is in question. As to morality, finally, if it should be found that its true nature is such that it must always conduce more than anything else, or be more indispensable, to universal happiness, it will be apparent that these two interests of goodness and universal happiness are never in conflict, but accordant with one another. But we are here anticipating.

It should hardly be necessary to observe that in general men do not desire their own happiness exclusively, but that of others also, at least in some degree. The qualities of benevolence and sympathetic kindliness were designated *humane* even in an age comparatively barbarous and before the dawn of Christianity, as being most characteristic of our species. These qualities

are in fact of almost universal growth, though hindered and often choked by the cares and preoccupations of egoism ; and being themselves, in general, probably the greatest sources of happiness to their possessors, must, if only for that reason, in the absence of counteracting influences, continue to be cultivated and to increase more and more : as we find actually that they have done in free and progressive communities. Does anyone really doubt, for example, that the nations of modern Western Europe are more richly endowed in this respect than their ancestors of any former age?

There is thus, then, for the human species, one permanent and universal desideratum, namely, happiness, and not merely that of each one for himself, but the happiness of all for each, and to some extent indeed of all sentient creatures. But it is by no means the case at present that this universal and permanent motive is what most influences the conduct of individuals for the time being. Things do not attract us in point of fact always in proportion to their recognised value as causes of happiness upon the whole even for ourselves, but very often disproportionately, (*e.g.*) through their nearness to the senses, or according to the amount of pleasure that is expected from them immediately. And again, the interests, or the more apparent and immediate interests at any rate, of an individual are frequently opposed to the greater and possibly

more real interests of his fellows or of society at large, and of these the former is commonly more powerful. And then finally, even to sympathetic and self-sacrificing persons, there is always the danger of an undue partiality for their family, lovers, and friends, or even for their class, coterie, or country; which may be just as baneful as the purest egoism to the general welfare. Thus it happens that the one permanent and universal interest is opposed, though in a minority of instances as we may hope, to the attractions of particular desires—not to mention other mental or physiological impulses.

But although amongst the motives of individual conduct desire for the general well-being, or even for the well-being of those in our immediate circle who are not specially endeared to us by blood-relationship, sexual passion, or friendship, is not ordinarily the strongest, nevertheless it is evident that the ascendancy of this common and permanent interest, wherever it is perceived and understood, must tend to be approved always, everywhere, and by every one; and similarly whatever conduct is seen to be detrimental to this wider interest will be generally disapproved and condemned. This view of matters, in fact, however much it may be obscured and hindered in judging our own actions by passion and appetite and by the prepossessions of self-interest, will in our estimate of other persons be positively accentuated and facilitated by those very causes,

since we ourselves commonly benefit by the self-restrained, altruistic, and just conduct of those about us. Such a view, moreover, is sure to be both generally and strenuously inculcated and promoted by every kind of artificial sanction. And so in fact it is. This, surely, and nothing else is the universal morality which is in process of evolution. The actual varieties of moral sentiment and principle may be traced either to the backward state of individuals or communities in respect of benevolence and sympathy or to the prevalence of special and divergent views as to the tendency or final outcome in respect of happiness of particular phenomena. These latter, again, are largely traceable to religious doctrines and traditions. The history of the development of morality, comprehensively considered, is nothing else than that of the gradual extension of altruism, with that of the modifications of ideas of utility caused by environment (*e.g.* the disproportionate emphasis upon physical courage in constantly militant communities) and by various extra-beliefs. Thus we see how the purely egoistic sentiments, sweetened only by 'natural affection' and other and more precarious personal ties, became subordinated to tribal and national ideals, and finally to the Christian ideal of universal brotherhood and common citizenship; and at the same time how the notion that the gods could be propitiated by offerings induced much voluntary sacrifice in reality useless, while even in the more

enlightened Christian communities asceticism has been widely cultivated and reverenced not merely as a means to greater spirituality but chiefly or largely on account of its supposed expiatory virtue.

In the various philosophies *bonum* or *summum bonum* is always either happiness or something else which is regarded as a chief means to this, or to the avoidance of unhappiness. Thus the Stoics, confronted with a general sordidness, inequality, precariousness, and inadequacy in the lives of individuals, and perceiving that this was owing to the neglect of beneficent laws, supposed erroneously that it was in the power of every man by due attention to such laws to exempt himself from every kind of evil. They ascribed persistently to universal nature a perfection not always apparent in particular manifestations taken separately. Happiness, they conceived, could only be secured by a devout study and contemplation of this perfection, by the bringing of one's life into harmony with it and willing submission to its dispensations, and by a steady indifference to all other pains and pleasures. In modern times we have generally either a Hedonism which is no longer egoistic, but seeks the happiness of all mankind impartially, or some form of Intuitionism which, however opposed theoretically to the former, approximates always more or less closely to a complete agreement with it in respect of the rules which it prescribes

practically. Hence a notable attempt has been made recently to reconcile these two opposing views or methods.

Nevertheless many still object to the notion that virtue is the pursuit of happiness, even though it be the happiness of others chiefly, and this doctrine has remained the subject of what seems to be an endless controversy.

Now it is true, of course, that moral judgments are not always conscious of an ulterior end; that this end, however much concerned in the origination of moral distinctions as human phenomena, becomes afterwards often quite secondary in men's minds, being regarded no longer as the *raison d'être* of those distinctions, but rather as something adventitious which Providence has affixed in some instances by way of temporal reward and retribution. Nature, or Providence, operating by processes of association or otherwise, impresses laws upon our consciousness, and effects that we come to love these for their own sake, and at the same time to fear them, so that we cannot transgress without suffering both remorse and sorrow. This proceeds so far that many, in their exaltation of the means, and having very rightly adopted this as an end for its own sake, lose sight of the original end altogether, and even protest against it as ignoble: as if virtue were destroyed or debased by putting it upon a hedonistic basis.

But it may well be that moral goodness for its own sake is an end of Providence and of man

too, and a more excellent one than individual happiness, and none the less that a tendency to universal happiness is the essence, or belongs to the essence, of moral goodness.

It is very evident that there is nothing noble in the mere pursuit of personal happiness as such; yet at the same time it is equally clear that altruism or the pursuit of other people's happiness is amongst the noblest things in nature. Moral admiration, which when raised to a certain intensity is called reverence, is never accorded but to some form of disinterestedness. It is true we speak of self-regarding or prudential virtues: and there is of course something admirable in, *e.g.*, the mere control of sensual appetites, even though interested. But the respect here awarded is more akin to the admiration of intellect or skill. It is not yet moral, except so far as we discern in the motive an element of self-forgetfulness. But the truth is there is always some gold in this matrix. A purely interested and pleasure-seeking virtue is, if not actually a contradiction in terms, at any rate an impossibility in fact, an abstraction never found in real life. It is rendered impossible by the great "law of transference" already referred to, which ensures that the means to any permanent end come to be regarded as ends and desired for their own sake. It is safe to say that every man who has a proper and enlightened regard for his own happiness must have acquired at least some disinterested leaning towards such virtues as are

directly conducive to this, as intrinsically desirable. Thus he will practise temperance not merely for the sake of health or of efficiency, honesty not merely as the best policy, but from a direct preference. Much more a benevolent person must be doubly disinterested, since he will love not only his fellow-creatures but virtue too of whatever kind, in proportion as his benevolence is extended and intelligent. And this love of virtue itself, or of God as the Perfection of Virtue, is not only the highest excellence of which our nature is capable, but also the most necessary; because benevolence in human nature is never sufficiently comprehensive or free from precariousness and respect of persons and, without justice, is often more hurtful than useful.

Virtue has then an intrinsic value apart from the happiness which it indirectly produces, and is itself, for a good man, the most desirable thing in the world both in himself and in others, without which all other things become worthless. But this in no way alters the essential nature of virtue, which is simply disinterestedness that conduces to the general happiness and the greatest amount of it. Useless sacrifice or endurance, not tending or believed to tend in the long run to the greatest happiness, is, so soon as its uselessness is recognised, no longer an object of approbation. Love itself, severed from this relation to the general well-being, becomes injustice, or Quixotical extravagance. Imagine a society in which altruistic

renunciation as such were regarded as an end for its own sake, in such sort that every one systematically neglected his own wants and necessities and occupied himself exclusively with those of others. The aspect of such a state of things, and of the inconvenience and confusion which must result from it, would be highly deplorable and even ludicrous. It is true that renunciation, when proceeding from a true spirit of love, though misguided, is often highly commended, and with some reason: because in the present state of the world the need for unselfishness is so great and predominant; because love is infectious, and we are apt to think, once we have got love, wisdom will follow in good time. Love is, in fact, the great desideratum, and will create wisdom, to gain its own ends, through experience. The Master of Love accordingly, who came not as a philosopher, but as the great Persuader, laid scarcely any stress upon wisdom, but emphasised almost exclusively the need for renunciation.

It is a common objection against the utilitarian theory of morality that it provides no infallible criterion of duty. Pleasures, it is said, cannot be measured one against another, nor the ultimate consequences of actions adequately estimated, least of all when, as often happens, rapid decision is required. The reply is that everything human is necessarily imperfect, and at the same time progressive. The criterion of utility, as a practical standard, may have its difficulties of application

like any other: though it is easy to exaggerate them. Meantime it remains the only criterion permanently valid and justifiable, because founded upon the unchangeable needs and tendencies of humanity. Moreover, it is for this very reason, namely, the difficulty of estimating consequences and degrees of utility, and the great liability of men's judgments to be warped and biassed by passion and self-interest, that Nature is studious to impress laws upon our consciousness, as above mentioned, as if these were binding absolutely upon us. Yet this moral consciousness, too, or conscience (as it is called) is not always immutably fixed and unprogressive, but has a tendency, as our internal development advances, to point and urge us more and more approximately to such conduct as is most truly useful: so that in this respect it is often in advance of the discursive reason. "In conscience" (the utilitarian may say it just as well as another) "we feel the motions of the Universal Reason which strives," progressively, "to convert the human organism into an organ of itself."

Sacrifice not tending or believed to tend ultimately to happiness is not virtue, but mere extravagance, unfruitful formalism, asceticism, or sentimentality. But this does not mean at all that any moral law may be broken as soon as it becomes inconvenient for those immediately concerned. All such laxity must be detrimental to the common weal, and very prejudicial to moral

character. A law may never be broken except in obedience to a superior law; and the nature of the alternative must be unmistakable. That is to say, that expediency is never a valid excuse for the temporary sacrifice of a principle save when there is a manifest disproportion between the importance of the sacrifice and of what is gained. That falsehood may be permissible to save the life of an innocent person is a truism. That one may practise fornication for a supposed benefit to his health is a pernicious error, and a manifest abuse of the doctrine of utility.

It will be found assuredly in the long run that the validity of the utilitarian standard, intelligently and fairly applied, can be sustained in every case before the tribunal of advancing humanity. Let us take a crucial instance. "A belated utilitarian meets a blind man upon a precipitous mountain. To help him means weariness, exposure, loss of way, probably death. To refrain from helping him brings no disadvantage of reproach; it will probably do no harm to the race, for the blind man is probably less useful than the seeing philosopher, and, if he dies (as he is pretty sure to do), the altruistic bonds of society will not be relaxed by an act which no one will know." Now it may be said: The doctrine of utility demands that the blind man be left to his fate; yet who is there, if he should hear of it, would not condemn conduct so base and cowardly? The answer is, that the philosopher would be blamed because

every one would suspect his motive. We should think that he was deficient in humanity of feeling and had obeyed nothing higher than selfish instinct reinforced perhaps by sophistical calculation: and it is ten to one we should be right. For the fact is that deliberation, except as to the best means of helping the helpless person, is almost certainly out of place in such circumstances. It is not a question of the relative value of two lives —which may not so easily be determined—but of the possibility of saving both, and of doing a charitable action, with the moral benefit that must result from it to all parties. For happiness in general the all-important thing is not that men should be skilful in casuistic hair-splitting, but that they should have a right spirit of mutual kindliness and neighbourly helpfulness—such a spirit as will prompt them to risk their own safety in the service of others whose danger is greater. And yet if the risk be clearly disproportionate to the chance of success, who can deny that the more prudent course might be the right one? Take another instance. The philosopher sees a man drowning at a distance from the shore. He is himself a feeble swimmer and his ability to save more than doubtful. He has a wife and children dependent upon him. He is brave and longs to help: yet he restrains himself. Will anyone blame him?

It is not a question here as to what doctrine is most likely to be practically efficacious for good in

the majority of instances—a very complicated question, to say the least of it—but, primarily at any rate, of what is scientifically true. Philosophy is always dangerous to the tyro and the sophist, and knowledge of any kind is to the egoist merely increased power for evil. The regeneration of the masses is not the business of philosophy, but must be left to other and more potent influences. Philosophy indeed may do something, directly or indirectly; but meantime the presumption is that the truest philosophy will be the most beneficent in the end. It is the business of a sound faith-philosophy to trust the scientific method, within the sphere of experience. The question here is to interpret the moral consciousness of humanity that is in process of evolution. Now it seems to us that the tendency of this consciousness, notwithstanding the protestations of many whose very zeal for morality (or rather perhaps for special views of theology) may possibly hinder them from any really impartial examination of its nature, is all in favour of utility, in the widest possible sense, as the ultimate test of right and wrong.

Virtue then, according to the virtual and ultimate judgment of humanity, is simply disinterestedness or love that is conformable to utility, namely, love or concern for the happiness of others; and, secondly, love for virtue itself, that is for useful disinterestedness, for its own intrinsic excellence and beauty. But it is evident that to

say, Love conformable to utility, is really only a more extended and explicit way of saying, Love simply; since whatever is inimical to the general welfare is in opposition to that wider charity which embraces all sentient creatures impartially like the very sunshine of Deity.

Such, in our view, is morality, and so much we think is true and irrefutable in the doctrine of utilitarianism. But it may strike the reader as something anomalous and even self-contradictory, that we make virtue consist in the pursuit of universal happiness while yet we do not identify good, nor the chief good, with happiness. But the contradiction is surely only apparent. By good we understand desirable: and the chief good, in our view, consists in the successful cultivation and enjoyment for and by every one of goodness, truth, and beauty in their various forms. But this, in our opinion, could not be so unless these three things were, directly or indirectly, the greatest causes of happiness; nor is the doctrine true in fact for those who do not as yet adequately appreciate these things in one form or another and enjoy them more than all else beside. It is true, that is, actually, at present, for a minority only, but ideally and, we may hope, prospectively, for every one. Morality consists in the pursuit of what is most desirable for every one. But things are desirable, or tend to become so, as we have seen, in proportion as they cause happiness in one way or another—though we must by

no means infer from this, as many do, that happiness alone is ultimately desirable.[1] Ideally, then, we should aim chiefly to promote universal goodness and culture, subordinating all else to these: but practically, as things are, it is a safe generalisation, that we should aim always to promote universal happiness and goodness, because these two interests alone are at present completely accordant and identical, and even knowledge, or beauty, ought never to be preferred to that supreme end, nor is it worth while to cultivate them, humanly speaking, except so far as they are or may some day be instrumental to it. For it is not only that these two latter things, namely, knowledge and beauty, are not good or desirable, humanly speaking, except so far as there are persons able to appreciate them, but further, it is primarily essential in order to the enjoyment of them that men should be delivered from ordinary cares and sufferings, which therefore, in so far as it is practicable, is at present the more urgent matter. (We say, humanly speaking: but neither does a reasonable faith attribute to Divine Providence any preference in sublunary affairs above the happiness and goodness of mortals.) When now, however, truth and beauty come to be desired by every one

[1] A thing is ultimately desirable which is felt to be desirable for its own sake, no *reason* being required. This feeling is the criterion. The question as to its *cause* or psychological or evolutionary origin is irrelevant, except as throwing light upon its permanence in the future.

supremely, together with virtue, it is evident that happiness too will be best promoted in general by the cultivation of all three. Thus it remains true eternally that morality is the pursuit of universal happiness.

Finally, however, if it be true, as shadowed forth in the speculations of Plato, that Truth, Beauty, and Goodness itself, or somewhat else from the true glory whereof these three, as manifested through the veil of phenomena, are but pale emanations, exists truly and eternally in a transcendental world, and is under any circumstances or conditions and in any degree knowable and accessible to the human spirit, it is then easy to conjecture, that the supreme good of man will consist finally in nothing else than this knowledge and communion, and his highest duty in the promoting of it by every possible and legitimate means. We say, legitimate; but really it is not to be supposed that this knowledge can be effectually promoted, we do not say by error, for some error is humanly unavoidable, but by conscious falsehood, unloveliness, and immorality.

In civilised communities men are already partially moralised: virtue is desired and cultivated to a certain extent by the majority, and every moderately good person will wish at least to retain that degree of useful disinterestedness which he has attained to, and probably even to improve upon it to some extent, if circumstances

be not too hard for him. But there is still the question how far it is reasonable to aim at perfection, or at any higher standard of conduct than we are prompted to by our actual inclinations. This, mainly, is the question as to the rational basis of morality. Is the pursuit of any greater excellence of character and conduct than we have already attained to always in accordance with our best interests; and if it be not so in any particular circumstances, why should we attempt it? Nay, indeed, what is to hinder us from degenerating and, if temptation present itself, from lapsing into vice and the most systematic and calculated egoism?

It was pointed out by Henry Sidgwick that on the principles of 'pure empiricism' no reason can be given for the axiom of prudence itself. In other words, if the mind, as known to us, be not a mysterious and transcendental unity, but merely a series or continuous stream of thoughts and feelings or states of consciousness, as is maintained by a section of the philosophic world, there is no obvious reason why any part of this series or stream should concern itself about the other parts or about the entire series as pleasurable or painful. Actually, of course, this difficulty never troubles anyone, the interest in his own past and future being an established fact in every man's consciousness. For practical purposes we identify ourselves constantly, such as we find ourselves at any moment, with some kind of permanent *ego*,

of which every 'psychosis' is taken to be only a phase or modification. Permanent happiness, in moments of calm reflection, seems to us preferable to the temporary gratification of any passion or the abandonment of one's self to any temporary impulse. Subjection to such impulses or passions, when these run counter to our more lasting interests, is generally regretted as a bondage from which we would fain be delivered if we knew how. Self-love, or regard for the agreeableness of the whole series of one's mental states, is a principle of nature, and there is here no question of reason; the function of the latter being merely to ascertain and prescribe means to an end recognised as actual.

Now the same holds good to a certain extent, *mutatis mutandis*, in regard to altruistic sacrifice. To the selfish man, not yet moralised, no reason can be given why he should consider the happiness of other persons as of equal importance with his own; nor why the interests of morality should be regarded as paramount over all others, for him. But then, fortunately, no one is entirely selfish, or entirely destitute of moral feelings and impulses: and it appears to be an unmistakable tendency of nature, or of Providence, to evolve such feelings and impulses in ever increasing strength and purity, and to enlarge the bonds of sympathy more and more in certain dominant races and communities—dominant for this very reason chiefly.

A man once moralised, by processes of nature or otherwise, besides being internally conscious that he *ought* to seek the happiness of all creatures, at the same time desires this ardently, and desires the happiness of those with whom he comes in contact at least equally with his own. He loves goodness with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. If circumstances are tolerably favourable, it is probable that he will find in this love, and in the consequences which flow from it, the greatest means to happiness for himself too, even in the present world. It is at least certain that a high degree of faithfulness to his ideal has become for him the indispensable condition of any happiness at all. So again to the ordinary man, but partially moralised, a degree at least of uprightness and charity is essential for peace of mind as well as for the avoidance of retributive evils. Even the egoist finds that personal enjoyment, if pursued directly and exclusively, is an *ignis fatuus* in the long run—or as if one should grasp at the sun instead of being content to walk under his beams. And positively, every person who has once felt a generous sentiment or gained a friend by unselfish exertion must be aware that his capacities and means of enjoyment would be enlarged indefinitely by the successful cultivation of altruistic feeling.

If there be a life beyond death, it is the more easy to imagine that *character* must be of immeasurably greater importance to every one in

the end than any external advantages, which must be purely temporary. Continuity alone would assure this, without supposing any positive sanctions or superadded enactments of Providence.

In general, that men are happy in proportion as they are good, other things being equal, is evident enough to an intelligent observer. That a man not good will necessarily be the happier in every case for doing right, is unfortunately not so easy to demonstrate. By doing good we, of course, tend to become good, and so far happy. Nevertheless, there are occasions in the lives of most people—the life of the egoist, hard-hearted and with conscience seared or unawakened, is largely made up of such occasions—when the guerdon of renunciation seems remote, uncertain, inadequate, inattractive; the penalty of wrong-doing in great part avoidable or outweighed by the immediate advantage. The believing mind rejects these false appearances; but how to convince the doubter, who cannot see beyond them? If one prefer pleasure to duty, how to persuade him that duty is always the road to pleasure or to the avoidance of greater evil in the long run? Nay, for that matter, how can you yourself be certain that it is so in every case for him?

But, after all, why should we be so anxious for a complete logical basis of morality? Such a basis, were it never so irrefragable, would perhaps convert no one. To those already converted it is, for practical purposes, to a great extent super-

fluous. For these latter, indeed, such a basis certainly exists, so far as themselves are concerned, as we have seen, and is adequate for its end—that reason and feeling may be in harmony. But love is essentially disinterested, and can be promoted only to a comparatively small extent, and indirectly, by interested arguments. Nature, in whose upward striving we ourselves have part, and the Power behind Nature, may be trusted surely to accomplish their own work in their own time and fashion. There is ground enough, surely, in a comprehensive survey of evolution, for the hope and willing confidence that in the long run good will always triumph over evil. What we have to do is to help forward this triumph by every possible means. Amongst such means, philosophy, though not the least important, is often temporarily unavailing. Philosophy too is on our side; but, in so far as it is grounded upon faith, is necessarily impotent against wilful unbelievers, and may even be perverted by such to bad ends. Experience alone will, in the end, enlighten them.

It is an evident corollary from the general doctrine of utility above advocated that, in intellectual matters, virtue consists not necessarily, as certain professed Utilitarians have inconsequently imagined, in the limitation of belief to the direct teaching of experience and reason, or to the results of scientific method, but has always

a relation, immediate or ultimate, to human needs and necessities.

Knowledge, in fact, as grounded upon experience and reason, owes all its stability and certainty for an awakened and critical intelligence (as we found) exclusively to this same principle of utility which now we have ascertained to be the basis of morality also, so far as grounded rationally. The canons of scientific evidence, consequently, if we should ever find them in real and permanent conflict with this higher principle, would have to give way before its superior authority: or rather, the one universally authoritative principle being thus divided against itself, the resulting clash must devastate and confound the intellectual kingdoms. But this we must hold to be for ever impossible. Scientific method, being nothing else than Nature's instrument, polished and sharpened, may be trusted implicitly. If this fail us, nothing can be relied upon. There lies consequently upon any one who should wish to induce us, in the name of utility, to forsake the canons of science in their positive teaching a burden of proof too heavy to be borne hitherto. Science, being a great heritage of humanity, is not to be tampered with or hindered for sectarian or private ends, though its conclusions need not, of course, be thrust upon individuals who have no use for them. But the canons of science are not the final test of all truth whatsoever. For it is apparent that this method is not adequate for

man's total necessities, and in particular it is at present indisputable that in the sphere of spiritual religion and transcendental theology it is, in the positive direction, often wholly useless and inapplicable, and at the best can establish nothing more than a precarious and disputed probability, which waxes and wanes in controversy like the moon. Not, indeed, that this probability need be discarded as worthless: it is to be exploited in every possible direction so far as honestly it may be. Peradventure something may result from it; for the present, however, its inadequacy is, to most of us, evident enough.

The ground of rational belief is essentially the same in science as in religion, that is to say, partly instinctive, partly voluntary and ethical. We must add, then, to the intellectual virtues commonly recognised — curiosity, carefulness, candour—this other, at once the greatest and the most indispensable, namely faith, that is to say, a cultivating or inducing of belief voluntarily for good ends: such belief being grounded not upon any irresistible or seemingly irresistible evidences, but upon human necessities and reasonable aspirations. Amongst such aspirations must be counted the desire to know Love or Virtue immediately as an everlasting and supreme Reality.

That the universal and eternal Power is Spirit and Love: this conviction, though consonant to a certain extent with philosophic probability (and

if we believe in knowledge at all we must have some respect also for probability), is not easily attained by that method alone. It enters the heart suddenly by inspiration, or forms itself insensibly and grows up as a consequence of faithful service, prayer, and purity of living. None the less it is essential to any complete and adequate philosophy of morality, that virtue is no mere human device for mutual protection and well-being, but pre-eminently at once final and efficient cause of the existence of the world.

CHAPTER III

FREEDOM

"Liberty is a power to act or not to act, according as the mind directs."—LOCKE, *Essay on the Human Understanding*.

"To be determined by our own judgement is so far from being a restraint or diminution of freedom, that it is the very improvement and benefit of it: it is not an abridgment, it is the end and use of our liberty."—*Ibid.*

THE problem of liberty or 'free will' is commonly regarded as among the most difficult and elusive in philosophy. The difficulty is, however, one may venture to think, not native to the question, but is imported into it by obscurities of language and materialistic pseudo-science on the one hand, and by theological and ethical prepossessions on the other.

It is a question of experience, primarily at any rate. Now the testimony of experience is here surely plain and unmistakable, if we will honestly consider it. It is to this effect, namely, that all action of the kind called voluntary is free in this sense, that it is not under compulsion, but proceeds from the mind's own volition as determined by motives; and where these conflict, by the stronger one or by the balance, or (as we may

say, on the analogy of the composition of forces) by the resultant, of the motives. Man, then, is a free agent: and this does not mean merely that the motions of one's body are effected by his own volition, but, further, that the act or *nisus* of volition itself is the consequence of his own desire or preference. Man, as a rational agent, has power within certain limits through the motions of his body, and to some extent also by the direction of his thoughts, to give effect to his desires and purposes. This, we imagine, is what 'common sense,' when not in a theological vein, understands usually by 'free will' or moral liberty.

But this doctrine, so simple and so plainly attested by all experience, is rejected by two classes of theorists, namely, on the one hand, by many scientific materialists and physical fatalists, who say that the alleged experience of freedom is illusory; and, on the other, by a formidable host of metaphysicians and traditionalists, who insist that freedom so defined is not freedom at all, and is fatal to responsibility.

To consider, first, the scientific objection. There are physiologists who tell us that our so-called voluntary actions are not really the effects of desire or preference at all, nor even of volition, but solely of changes in the nervous system. On this theory we are, quite simply, conscious automata. The act of volition is not properly an act at all, but an illusory feeling of spontaneity accompanying the action of certain material

forces, or a liberation of energy in the cerebrum. There is no conflict or balancing of motives, but only an interaction of molecular vibrations or other cerebral processes. Neither desire, nor intelligence, nor volition have any causative force or efficacy whatever; it is the brain which decides directly, without intelligence, and moves the body by processes as purely mechanical as those of a steam-engine. Consciousness is a mere '*epiphenomenon*' or by-product, "like the sound which the bell of a clock gives out when it is struck," which has no reaction upon the mechanism. The mind lives in the machine, perceiving and thinking, enjoying, suffering and scheming, but without power or influence, and no more moves it than Dionysius moved his ear-cavern, or Asmodeus the bottle in which the magician had enclosed him.

That this view is opposed to common sense is, of course, obvious. It means, for example, that the ink-markings which I am tracing upon this paper are not determined by my cogitations, but by some complicated and unascertained movements of the minute particles of my brain, which again are simply the direct results of previous movements or stimuli, the cogitations being merely collateral and superfluous! Scientifically, too, it is mere hypothesis, and illegitimate to boot, since not only is it without evidence, but it explains nothing. It is useless to say, we cannot conceive how thought can produce motion; the retort is just as easy: Neither do we understand

how motion can produce thought or feeling, which you say it does; nor indeed, if we have any tincture of metaphysics, how any one thing can produce any other that is different from itself. But if anything be really incredible, it is surely this automaton hypothesis. All experience tells us that bodily motions of the kind called voluntary are invariably the consequents of corresponding mental efforts, and these latter of desires or motives; yet we are asked to believe that this universal correspondence is mere coincidence. Desire, deliberation, will, and action are consecutive effects of the cerebral mechanism. Day follows night, but the one is not the cause of the other; they are alternate consequences of sunlight and rotation: even so, we are to suppose, the desire to act in a particular way is, in the absence of effective hindrances, invariably followed by a feeling of the corresponding effort of volition, and this again by the act or movement itself; yet neither of these latter is an effect of what precedes it, but all three are merely the results of other antecedents, and without direct connection amongst themselves—results, moreover, of which the two first are without consequences: produced from nothing (for it is not pretended[1] that coincidently with their generation anything is lost from the

[1] Not pretended, *i.e.*, by consistent Automatists. Mental states, according to these, are in fact not consequents, but concomitants, of the corresponding neural movements (*vide*, *e.g.*, Chas. Mercier, Clifford and Huxley). Neurosis and psychosis are simultaneous, parallel phenomena—different aspects of one and the same process,

physical universe), they again become nothing, after a brief existence, and are thus subversive of fundamental laws. The teleological significance of such a theory, one may remark, should not be overlooked. If the theory be true we have then, evidently, in this universal correspondence without causal connection of desire, will, and action, a pre-established harmony, a harmony so wonderful and so fortunate for our happiness that some of us might perhaps be almost content to give up the illusion of freedom upon such terms, which would involve, at any rate, the realisation of our wishes to the same extent as heretofore, and the mere contemplation of which would surely convey us as on an enchanted carpet, those at least who were willing, straight to optimism and Theism. Such a harmony, it is evident, could not be due to 'natural selection,' since, by hypothesis, it has no tendency to the promotion or conservation of life, no ascertainable tendency or causative influence of any kind: it must therefore have been created or established expressly for our benefit. Meantime, however, the theory is, as we have said, destitute of evidence, and is opposed to natural beliefs, which are probably for most of us irresistible.

as some say. On the other hand, if mental states are results of the transformation of physical forces, when they cease they must be re-transformed, or must produce other mental states: they are, therefore, causal agents, their effects being, presumably, besides other mental states, the succeeding neural and muscular movements (*vide* Spencer).

But, again, there are those who say that the alleged consciousness of freedom is illusory, because the will is determined by antecedent conditions. This, however, is a misapprehension. The consciousness of freedom is nothing more nor less than this, namely, a consciousness, or a belief resulting from past experience, that certain of our bodily motions are controlled by our volition, and volition by our desires or motives. It is a consciousness or belief that we ourselves, with such character and motives as we are possessed of, are, not the original, but the proximate causes of our actions. Some of us may imagine that we are the original causes; but that surely is not given in experience, and arises merely from a want of attention to the antecedents. What experience really teaches is, not that our volitions are un-caused or 'self-caused' (whatever that may mean), but that they are caused by our own wishes or predominating wishes. This, however, is sufficient for freedom, being, indeed, the very essence of it: and it certainly is not contradicted by any doctrine of determination short of automatism.

Schopenhauer says more wittily than justly, that a stone thrown by the hand, if conscious, would imagine itself free, because not perceiving the impulse which started it. No such thing. The stone would think nothing at all about freedom, unless it found by experience that its motion was consequent upon a desire to move. In this

latter case only, and if, further, there intervened constantly between the desire and its accomplishment a feeling of effort, the *nisus* of volition, the illusion would indeed be inevitable, and excusable enough too, that itself was the cause of its motion.

To ourselves it has always seemed wonderful that misapprehension as to the nature of what constitutes moral liberty should be still prevalent amongst thinkers acquainted presumably with the elucidations of the question by Hobbes, Locke, J. S. Mill, and other writers scarcely less clear and candid. Amongst Determinists this misapprehension (for such we must consider it) is probably confined for the most part to the less discriminating, though countenanced undoubtedly to some extent by the unguarded language of those who should know better; but with their opponents, the advocates of the metaphysical doctrine of so-called 'free will,' it is certainly quite general, being, indeed, essential to their standpoint. We hear constantly such expressions as this: If a man's actions are due to heredity and circumstances, he '*cannot help*' his transgressions and failings. Or again: If one's character be made *for* him and not *by* him, where is the sense, or where the justice, of punishing him? The error implied in such language has been exposed so frequently and so thoroughly that it seems almost hopeless to contend against it any longer. One can but go on repeating the old explanations, though it be *ad nauseam*, with such variations and additions as

one's poor wit may suggest to him, in the belief that ever more and more of those who are open to conviction will be persuaded that there is nothing really harmful, but quite the contrary, in the true doctrine of Determinism properly expressed and understood.

Science, based upon experience and rational faith, teaches us that all phenomena, physical and moral, are subject to causation. In particular, a wide study of human nature, both collectively and in the individual, teaches that conduct is the result of character and environment, and that character, again, is due to the previous mutual interaction of environment and of hereditary or other innate tendencies. That all our actions and motives are the result originally of conditions of one kind or another over which we had no control, since they were antecedent to our very existence, is what experience points to unmistakably, if it does not positively and irrefragably demonstrate it. Nor do we see why this should trouble any one, so long as his actions and character are such as he would wish them to be: while, on the other hand, if they are not such as he wishes them to be, it is certain that by acting upon this wish he can in time, by one means or another, greatly modify both his habits and his character. It is true this does not happen without the wish, and he does not create that: he has no power over it. He has no power therefore, it may be said, over his character, except through

the wish, which is a part of his character; and that is as much as to say he has no power at all. But to this we reply: Of what possible use were a power without the wish to put it into exercise? An antecedent and original power over one's character not proceeding from this character itself, would be such a power antecedent to any wish, that is to say motiveless, and therefore useless and ineffective for any purpose whatever. It is sufficient surely if, wherever a desire is present, the power, too, be available. It is an abuse of language, and misleading, to say one 'cannot help' his character or his habits, when, in fact, he can alter them if he wishes to do so. Actually, of course, no one is without desires of one kind or another in regard to his own character and conduct; and the point is, that being already provided with desires, we have power, within certain limits, to make those desires effective. Our business is to see that we use this power wisely. We have, then, so far, all the freedom that could possibly be of any use to us. That we did not make our desires is altogether beside the mark, so long as those desires are such as are capable of satisfaction, and a source of blessing to us. If there are desires which we find lead us into trouble, or such as cannot be satisfied, we shall desire to eradicate these; and the probability is that we shall succeed if we take the right method.

But this brings us to a second and higher conception of freedom. The desires and other

influences which act upon the will are often conflicting or of contrary tendency, and their tendency in relation to one another is not always evident at the first view; but we are endowed with a power of suspending our volitions and deliberating as to what is best for us, or for the promotion of our ends, in accordance with our ideas of permanent good — as it were calling an internal council of our motives under the moderation and presidency of reason. Here then we have an important extension of liberty, without which it might have been of little or no use to us. We may define liberty, in this higher sense, the effective predominance in us of those desires which are most fixed and permanent, which we have identified ourselves with after due reflection, and in particular the predominance, supposing that we have adopted them, of the supreme motives of universal happiness and virtue, with such others, if any, as we may hold deliberately to be constituents of the chief good. But this secondary freedom, too, is, of course, subject to limitation, and may even be temporarily altogether lost.

It is obvious that if those desires which are most permanent and deliberately adopted and cherished in all calm and reflective moments are temporarily eclipsed or overborne more or less frequently by stronger passions or other forces (as habit, hereditary tendency), which we do not identify ourselves with, but which merely pass over us like waves and leave us only the worse

for their buffeting, we are so far not free in the truest sense of the word. But, on the other hand, it is equally clear that it depends largely upon ourselves whether or no we are to be emancipated. If our desire for this emancipation be sufficiently strong and persistent, we shall certainly attain to it. But here it is true that faith is necessary. For it is often the case that those desires or other forces which are temporarily the strongest are just those which at all other times we wish most to be delivered from, so that we do the thing we would not. Here, then, is the real problem of liberty: and we may well ask in such a case, Who will deliver me from the body of this death? But our true freedom is not affected one way or the other by the fact that all these forces, and all forces whatsoever, have an origin outside of ourselves, but only by their good or bad effect in respect of the ends which we have most at heart: just as it is nothing to a man in a boat that he did not make wind and tide, oar and rudder, and his own arm and brain, so long as he can turn them all to good account. Law, which binds the ignorant and slothful, is to the understanding and the strong an instrument—the indispensable one—of freedom and of power.

Determinism, then, is not opposed to liberty in any true sense of the word. Determinism is not fatalism because we are, in so far as determined by motives, though not the original, yet certainly

the proximate and willing causes of our own moral destiny, which never can be accomplished without our consent. In this sense the being determined by motives *is* liberty. In a secondary though not less important sense practically the question of liberty is not whether we are determined or not determined, but as to what are the motives or other forces which determine us. Liberty, in this sense, is the being determined by one's deliberately adopted and permanent ideas of good and evil.

But the great crowd of doctrinaires, Arminian traditionalists, and intuitional theorists, will not admit this for a moment. These will have it that a mere liberty to do as we choose and to choose as we prefer, or as our motives determine us (which is the same thing), or even as reason guides us in accordance with our fixed notions of good and evil (for this last, too, is often repudiated by implication even when it is explicitly insisted upon), is not liberty at all, or not unless attended with something else which in reality is wholly inconsistent and incompatible therewith. It is not enough, say they, that man is free to follow his will unless this will itself be 'free,' that is, not subject to causation, not determined by antecedent conditions. To deny 'free will' in this fanciful and metaphysical sense is treated persistently as equivalent to a denial of human liberty and responsibility. If man's will be not 'free' in this sense he is himself,

it is insisted or taken for granted, not free nor accountable for his actions.

How strange that these subtle theorists do not perceive, or will not acknowledge, that to assert the independence or partial independence of a man's will upon his desires or motives is to assert its independence of the man himself, and to deny his effective control over his own volitions and actions, and consequently to deny, and not to assert, his freedom and responsibility!

We shall return to this point presently. Meantime, as we have said, the question is one of experience. In such a question we are concerned primarily with fact, afterwards with theory.

We have said, experience proves freedom—and determination. But it is necessary to elucidate this further, because, strangely enough, the advocates of 'free will' constantly claim this witness for their own doctrine. Thus in the familiar dictum of Samuel Johnson: "All theory is against the freedom of the will, and all experience for it."

Such a statement, if accepted, is enough to discredit philosophy for all time. Its plausibility, however, is due entirely to ambiguity of language. We must distinguish, that is to say, between the doctrine of man's natural liberty, which experience testifies to, and the metaphysical dogma of 'free will,' which is contradicted at once by all experience and all sound reasoning.

As applied to the former the term free will

is, of course, tautological, being equivalent to *voluntary volition*: it may, however pass, *coram populo*, as a protest against fatalism. But it is better to avoid the expression altogether, and in philosophy, to employ it only in the sense which long prescription justifies.

We know from experience that we are free: but some of us have, further, a confused feeling that the fact of predetermination, if true, would be inconsistent with this freedom. Hence we say experience disproves it. But predetermination, if it be through our own motives, our own desires or preferences, *is* freedom. In the words of Locke, man "could not be free if his will were determined by anything but his own desire, guided by his own judgment."

We know that we are free, say the Libertarians, in despite of all theoretical reasoning, because when we choose between two courses we feel that we might choose differently if we would. This feeling, though not properly speaking a direct experience of that which it points to, is doubtless veridical enough; and it is what no discriminating Determinist denies for a moment. We might choose otherwise if we would. Yes, surely: but in fact we do not choose otherwise, because the motive is wanting. Were we to choose otherwise now in order to demonstrate our freedom, we should even then be determined by this very motive, namely, the desire to prove our freedom. The metaphysician, just like the

'man in the street,' is conscious of freedom, and confounds this with indeterminism through inattention to the conditions.

If, however, there be any discerning person who affirms distinctly and deliberately more than this; who tells us that really and truly he is conscious at the moment of choosing that he might choose otherwise than as his strongest motive would determine him,[1] as to this it must be insisted: that such an alleged consciousness of what might be is not and cannot from the nature of the case be a direct experience, but only a conviction of the truth of that which it testifies to. Such a conviction might originate conceivably in more ways than one. In order to adduce experience as a proof or evidence of its truth, one must be able to point to some instance or instances in the past in which he has chosen deliberately (not from habit or other

[1] We understand Prof. Sidgwick (*Methods of Ethics*, 4th ed., p. 67) as making this assertion. He affirms a consciousness, in choosing between alternatives of conduct, that the mere absence of adequate motive is not an obstacle, or not an insuperable obstacle, to his choosing what is right or reasonable. The statement, however, is deprived of the importance which, coming from an authority so discriminating and of such rare candour, it might have possessed, by the accompanying admission, that the feeling in question may be illusory, and that apart from this feeling all the cumulative weight of evidence "amounting to almost complete proof" is in favour of Determinism. But did Prof. Sidgwick really mean that, in the event of his choosing what was right or reasonable, this rightness or reasonableness and his sense of it would not always be the motive, adequate and preponderating, which determined him, if at least his choice was to be morally valuable?

non-rational impulse) without adequate motive in opposition to the motive which at the moment was strongest. Can any one ever be sure of that?

If we may speak for ourselves, we must say that we at least have never had either direct experience, or any consciousness or conviction, of its possibility. A consciousness, in the proper sense, of 'free will,' we believe to be an impossibility. The truth is probably, as said, that often the consciousness or true conviction of freedom (in the proper sense of this latter word) is present in the minds even of persons skilled in introspection without the accompanying thought of the motive which must influence them, and further, that this consciousness is, in view of ethical and theological prepossessions, peculiarly liable to be misinterpreted. To ourselves at any rate, and to many others, the notion that we can choose except as our motives (or other causes) shall determine us, is not only contrary to past experience, but perfectly inconceivable. It is, we must hold, in the words of Laplace, "une illusion de l'esprit qui, perdant de vue les raisons fugitives du choix de la volonté . . . se persuade qu'elle s'est déterminée d'elle-même et sans motifs."

"Nay, but," you say, "we do not choose without a motive; we only choose, among several motives, which we shall act upon." The reply is, that it is the relative strength of the motive, or its pressing hardest upon you at the moment, which determines you, otherwise your *choice* is motive-

less even though you had a motive, or several, in view. Why is it, pray, that you choose that motive in particular, and not another? It is nothing to the purpose that you are conscious of a motive, if this motive is not the cause of your action.

What experience really testifies to is then, on the one hand, the natural liberty of man in respect of his volitions and bodily motions, and on the other hand—which is but the reverse side of the same fact—the determination of all volitions by the man's own motives or preferences. This is only what all reasonable people are convinced of and take for granted when they are not thinking of theological and ethical problems. They take for granted that actions, when not automatic, are explicable by motives, if we could know enough of the man's mind and circumstances. And why? Because we find actually that our own actions are so explicable, if we are skilled in self-analysis, and because experience shows that just in proportion as we are acquainted with and understand the minds and circumstances of other people, their actions are seen to be so explicable and determinable by known forces. This is taken for granted, in particular, by all preachers and moral teachers who seek to influence men through their feelings, or by appealing to a spiritual and determinable force in them, and not by a useless and senseless appeal to a transcendental and visionary principle superior to all feeling and all influences whatso-

ever. It is taken for granted, too, by all poets and makers of fiction,[1] whose object, be they 'idealists' or 'realists,' is always to paint something resembling nature. Just imagine a drama in which the behaviour of the persons bore no fixed or intelligible relation to their characters and circumstances!

Nevertheless, suppose that we have really a power of choosing in opposition to our strongest motive: one does not see what is gained by such a possession. Such a power implies, of course, the possibility of acting irrationally when everything prompts us to act reasonably. But the word power is evidently quite inapplicable here; or rather the power, if it exists, does not properly belong to *us* at all, but is something foreign which acts through us independently of our wishes and the operations of which *we* cannot control or foresee.

The will is a power or faculty of acting and thinking in accordance with one's desires or motives. If now, however, it be true that this power can under any circumstances act or decide independently, or in part independently, of such motives, it is evident that, so far, it is not really

[1] So, *e.g.*, Henry Fielding, no enemy assuredly to theology or moral responsibility, remarks in his *Tom Jones*: "It is a more useful capacity to be able to foretell the actions of men in any circumstances from their characters, than to judge of their characters from their actions. The former, I own, requires the greater penetration, but may be accomplished by true sagacity with no less certainty than the latter."

under our control, but 'free,' or independent of us. "*La volonté est souveraine*," says Cousin: but if so, then indeed it is not *la volonté*, but we ourselves who are subject and not free. We are its instruments: we do not possess, but are possessed by it. It is easy to say that what decides in such cases is, not necessarily our strongest desire or motive, but the transcendent principle or *self* in us. But the truth is that of this transcendent self, assuming its existence, we know nothing whatever. The self which interests us, in whose good or ill fortune we are so nearly concerned, whose good character and excellence of nature is an object of our so great solicitude, is the congeries of thoughts and feelings which makes up our consciousness, with the powers and potentialities belonging to it: a congeries bound together, indeed, as we may hold, by some mysterious principle of unity, but of the nature of which principle we know absolutely nothing. It is, for our consciousness, empty of all content and character. It is not an object of concern to us in itself, but only as the ground or condition of our empirical self-consciousness. If it be, indeed, this principle which determines our volitions and actions, or certain of them, independently or in part independently of our desires and aspirations, this principle is then in a certain figurative sense 'free'; but it is evident that we with our desires and aspirations are not free, but in the grip of and dependent as it seems for our very existence upon a power or

principle which, however close and inseparable from us, is none the less thoroughly alien and mysterious, and not necessarily friendly or favourable to our ends. It bestrides us like some Old Man of the Ocean of infinite being: not however to be befooled by wine or other phenomenal expedient; which sleeps only when we sleep, retaining its grip all the while, and which we never could be rid of save at the cost of our personality, by plunging both together with it into those all-dissolving waters.

Let us grant, if you will, that this principle, which it is said determines us, is our truest self; still it is evident that a person who acts independently of motives, or who chooses between motives independently of their relative strength, is so far not free in any sense worthy of the name, but subject to chance, or, which is the same thing, to lawless and motiveless caprice. His actions have no fixed relation to his desires or purposes. He does not adopt a particular course because he prefers it, or because he deems it right or reasonable, but just for no reason at all; for if he were guided, let us say, by his sense of right, his will must be determined by that, and consequently would be, by hypothesis, not free. How is such a person to depend upon any of his desires being satisfied, any of his purposes accomplished, through his own agency? He is not master of himself or of his destinies. To talk of his being accountable for the actions in question (those, that is, which

are 'free' or dictated by free will) is most absurd. You may say, if you like, there is something in him, his truest self, which is accountable—if one could catch it. But this something is not the man as we know him: it cannot be the subject of liking or resentment, admiration or contempt. To man, at least, it is not accountable.

We are told sometimes that it is vain to seek to influence a person whose will is not 'free,' but determined by antecedent conditions; and further, that the good or bad actions of such a person are in any case morally worthless or not blameable since they do not proceed from himself originally, but from external causes. On the contrary, one would have thought it self-evident that the power to influence a person for good or evil is conditional upon his being determinable by external influences; and as to the moral value of conduct so determined: if such conduct be really without merit or guilt, then is the work of the preacher in any case unavailing, for moral and spiritual ends at any rate, since, by hypothesis, just so far as men are influenced by his preaching any consequent improvement in their lives is morally and spiritually worthless, since it is due to the preacher and not to themselves. But the truth is that what is really valuable is chiefly character and motive. Actions if they were not an index to these latter, might be useful or hurtful indeed, but morally would be without significance. The persons exhibiting them would be as irresponsible

as sleep-walkers and lunatics. Praise and blame, reward and punishment, would be equally out of place and ineffective. Admiration could not be accorded, resentment could not reasonably be entertained against creatures who were merely the vehicles of a mysterious force the operations of which could not be explained, or predicted, or influenced. Nor could any such person be trusted for a moment, his conduct being not predictable from any knowledge of his character and antecedents.

It may be said, men's volitions, though 'free' and undetermined, manifest usually a certain consistency. Well, if this be admitted, with all that is implied in it, there is comparatively little left that is worth arguing about. This consistency *is* character, or is that which indicates it. If actions can be foreseen from a knowledge of previous conduct, that is practically all that we contend for. But will it be seriously contended that this consistency has no fixed relation to, is not causally connected with, habitual thoughts, feelings, and pre-established tendencies? And is it this consistency or predictableness, or a certain elusive contingency, that is really valuable in a good man's conduct?

It is usual to allow the influence of motives and causation, but to pretend at the same time that this is limited by free will. This is merely to diminish the evil without removing it. As we have said, just so far as a man is 'free' in this

sense he cannot be influenced, his actions cannot be foreseen, nor explained, nor commended, nor condemned. His own past conduct must be, so far, to himself an enigma, and his future uncertain. He himself cannot influence it by any precautions. He, the man, is not master of his fate.

But some religious persons, more religious than philosophical, if we had been discoursing to them in the foregoing manner, would have been burning to interrupt us. A religious man, they would say, does not rely upon himself, but upon the assistance and indwelling of a Higher Power. Yes indeed: and experience shows abundantly that such reliance is not vain. But let us still distinguish. Such persons are indeed free in the highest and fullest sense; but they have not free will, as the metaphysician understands it. They were determined, led by motives, presumably, or perchance moved by the Power itself, in seeking for this inspiration. This inspiration once found and realised is henceforth a new force or motive, and by far the strongest and most irresistible. It is a new spiritual environment, an inflowing and inworking energy. But if the persons in question have really free will, this Power also is, so far, inaccessible to them, ineffective and inoperative. Their final perseverence is always in jeopardy, and in proportion as they are 'free' cannot be relied upon at all, is neither probable nor improbable. Their continuance hitherto in that state of grace, as also their first clinging to that rock,

or first motion towards that haven, is something inexplicable, without intelligible significance. It was not their great need, not their sense of the instability of all that they had most valued, not their aspiration for something better, which impelled them, nor did the Power draw them: it was pure chance, caprice, or fate, or nothing. Conversely, if their need impelled them, if the Power drew them and now holds them, then are they not 'free' according to those perverse metaphysicians.

If a man be so far fallen and enslaved that no motive of his own, no power in himself, is strong enough, despite the wish, to break the chains of passion and custom, still if there be, as he has heard, a Source near at hand, an Environment of which hitherto he has been entirely or for the most part unconscious, whence he may draw the strength needed, such a man is still free in a true sense, or may become so. But all depends upon the sincerity of his wish. Man cannot save himself, cannot even with sincerity seek for salvation, unless he be in a manner saved already—cannot, not because he is not free, but because he will not. But Nature is perpetually striving through cosmic and secular forces for the renovation and betterment of mankind, her chosen ones, often in spite of themselves. If a soul be irreclaimable she severs it from the body and brain which have vitiated it, perchance transports it to a sphere more effectually reformative; or, more mercifully,

where the desire for amendment is present, though weak and fitful, opens a door for the influx of a supernatural auxiliary, which thereupon flows in abundantly across the threshold and fills the chamber of a man's soul and makes of him a new creature to the astonishment of beholders.

The real difficulty is not in determining the nature of human liberty, but in reconciling this with old views of theology and eschatology. If all volitions are subject to causation, then, it is said, all are referable to the first cause or origin of the universe, which is God: thus we make Him the author of sin. If we are not the original causes of our own good or evil actions, with what justice can we be rewarded or punished eternally?

Now as to the origin of evil, the doctrine of free will cannot help us. Our wills were created 'free,' let us suppose, that is, neither good nor bad, yet with a mysterious potentiality, afterwards actualised, of good or evil. We desire to proceed here with all possible circumspection and reverence, with fullest acknowledgment of the limits of finite reason, yet fearlessly, as far as we may. There was created then, on this hypothesis, potential evil, and with the foreknowledge, as we are given to understand, that it would become actual. But suppose there was no foreknowledge: still there was potential, or possible, or contingent evil; and this, when it became actual, was not suppressed, but permitted. Now to permit evil which one has

made potential is, for human reason, the very same morally and in effect as to create it. You may say reason is here incompetent. But if so, why talk of free will, since this cannot help us, but leads us only into "wandering mazes"? Moreover, it is an undeniable fact that evil or imperfection did not originate with human offences, but was in the world from the first origin of animal consciousness upon this planet at least, being inherent in the physical constitution of things. The testimony of the rocks is here unmistakable: we find everywhere the indications of primeval carnage, the vestiges of primeval struggle and decay, and presumably, therefore, of a degree of pain and suffering. Nature is one process, and imperfect, according to our notion of abstract perfection. But the solution of this problem, if there be a solution, lies not in endeavouring to exculpate Nature by making scapegoats of her children, but in the broadening of our outlook so as to understand that evil is after all only relative, and the means to a higher good than were otherwise attainable. The most trite simile is here the best: the beauty of music is only increased by the discords which are resolved into harmony. The soul of the musician is all-harmonious since he is never conscious of a dissonance without at the same time anticipating its resolution. The purity of the Invisible Power is no more sullied by the imperfections of nature than the eternal blue sky is by the clouds which, racking across its face,

discharge themselves in earth-revivifying showers or melt again into the azure.

As to the doctrine of retribution, it is most desirable to avoid rash inferences and crude statements. That the doctrine as held formerly by the majority of Christians contained elements of barbarism, there can, however, be no question. There is no more grotesque fiction of anthropomorphism than that which attributes to the universal parent human resentments with the addition of implacability. A truly good *man*, we know, has no hatred of sinners, but only of their sins.

> "Jamais contre un pécheur ils n'ont d'acharnement,
> Ils attachent leur haine au péché seulement,
> Et ne veulent point prendre, avec un zèle extrême,
> Les intérêts du ciel plus qu'il ne veut lui-même."

Nevertheless, whether God will punish His own creatures except by way of cause and effect, and with a view to their amendment through experience, may still be open to question, Determinism notwithstanding. That He might further punish some of us for the honour of the law of virtue: this is conceivable, though contrary to the entire analogy of nature. For the ill deeds of men, it may be argued, proceeding from evil desires and motives personal to themselves, are execrable and deserving of punishment, albeit considered as natural phenomena they are but so many links in the immeasurable chain of the Divine purposes. That He will condemn any creature

eternally is what faith cannot admit for a moment. For surely there is no one so bad but means may be found for his conversion in the resources of infinite mercy; and if it were not so, the law of love surely were more honoured by the annihilation of such an one than by his going on for ever sinning and suffering. That a corrupt soul, the product of nature, can be neither changed nor destroyed: this argues too radical a defect in the scheme of creation. A 'free' will least of all could ever be unchangeably evil, for such a will has *ex hypothesi* no fixed nature or irreversible bias, but may change at any moment, however unexpectedly. The false psychology and the false eschatology are thus not only intrinsically incredible, but mutually incompatible. A will so long as it continues 'free' is fit neither for hell nor heaven, nor is deserving of either. If you say a free will may have contracted an insurmountable tendency to evil through inveterate contumacy, we reply: Such a will is no longer 'free.' Shall it be punished *in infinitum* for finite offences? Justice demands surely that this enslaved will be once more liberated, in which case, by hypothesis, the chances are just even that it will make amends by future good conduct.

We have been led thus lengthily to combat a time-honoured fallacy, in view of the ingenious pertinacity of its defenders, and because it seems to us important that morality and religion should

be freed from the encumbrance of an incredible and compromising dogma. Nevertheless, after all has been said, one must admit that there is a vitality in this ancient doctrine of free will, as actually held, which almost compels us to respect it in spite of its inherent absurdity. Thus that most subtle and penetrating analytic genius, William James, finds it still credible (though very far from demonstrable), and adheres to it from choice out of regard, evidently, for what seems to him its moral value. To ourselves this moral value seems purely adventitious and precarious at the best, being founded wholly upon misconception and prejudice. We discern here in some of the most advanced thinkers what seems to us a remnant of obscurantism, betraying a deficiency of faith in nature, or experience, as the prime teacher. The really stimulating doctrine surely is that very Determinism so often misrepresented and travestied. As held practically, however, the opposing tenet is evidently not altogether useless. Fatalistic as it really is in its implications, it is certain that few or none of its adherents so understand it.[1] Practically it amounts probably to little more than a belief in human responsibility com-

[1] Sir William Hamilton pointed out that the doctrine could only be conceived clearly as 'casualism' (just the point here chiefly insisted upon), and yet held, with Kant, that we are bound to adhere to it, as involved in the moral imperative, of which we are conscious! But the moral imperative is the voice of nature striving to influence us and convert us to the right. Of what use, if we cannot be influenced? The moral imperative implies Determinism.

bined with a feeling that it is always possible to act in opposition to our strongest motive; that the weaker of two motives, if at the same time the better one, can, if duly fostered and concentrated, summoning to itself all its resolution and calling on the gods, prevail over the stronger. And it is true, of course, that the weaker motive may often in this way, by being taken at the flood, become the stronger one at the critical moment. Or the stronger one perchance may be rendered innocuous by appropriate action before it can press upon us in full force. David with his sling will slay the giant Goliath—while yet at a distance, ere he has time to close with him.

Determinism teaches us that if we would accomplish anything in morality we must use adequate means, whether natural or supernatural. It does not teach, assuredly, that such means are in any circumstances necessarily inaccessible to us. If the wish be present, even though relatively feeble, means may be found to make it prevail. But it will not do to go into temptation trusting to prior resolutions, still less to chance impulse, or motiveless spontaneity, or even in the help of the gods, unless we are assured of it beforehand; for this help is not granted, or not available, where faith is wanting; nor can Heaven itself prevail through us if, when the battle is joined, we no longer desire the victory.

CHAPTER IV

OPTIMISM

"I believed in God and in Nature, and in the triumph of good over evil."—GOETHE.

IT is a primal rule of faith, as we have seen, to trust in evidence, without partiality, as far as it will take us. While, therefore, it is very desirable to have a bright and hopeful outlook upon the universe, and more especially in regard to the condition and destiny of mankind, still one ought not without very cogent reasons to depart from that principle of impartial judging, far less to inculcate anything incredible, which would only strike people as a mockery of their desires. To be unwilling to follow evidence betrays, not faith, but the want of it. Only if the present world were incurably evil, and without hope as to any future one, would one be justified in shutting his eyes, and deluding himself as far as possible as to the true nature of things. For in that case indeed Truth, in this concrete phasis or manifestation at any rate, being without any genuine qualities of divinity, were unworthy of a man's devotion.

To consider, first, the actual condition of things. Temperament and circumstances being so indefinately variable, the true moral colours of nature are difficult to ascertain. Diseased persons (not always the most unhappy) and others peculiarly unfortunate being left out of account, there are, nevertheless, certain broad facts which must be patent to every unbiassed observer.

Men ask, Is life worth living? and very many answer as if the question had been, Is it adequate to my desires? Am I contented with it? Naturally the reply is in the negative, such persons being as unreasonable in their desires as they are deficient in philosophy. But the real meaning of the question is twofold: first, Is life worthy to be lived? Secondly, Is it upon the whole a blessing, providing a balance or preponderance of enjoyment? The answer to the former question depends obviously upon ourselves. The second is, unfortunately, matter of dispute and opinion: but this, we suspect, is due largely to a cynical bias and want of candour. That the majority of persons are discontented is clear enough: that they are not really upon the whole miserable is, we think, equally certain.

Life is good. This is reckoned amongst those maxims which lie at the base of all practical thinking. It is clear, in fact, that the vast majority of persons desire life and take it for granted that others do so: so that we wish men

length of days just as we wish them happiness. Life consists in the exercise of one's faculties, and this, under normal and healthy conditions, affords enjoyment. But this enjoyment is so continuous that so long as it is only moderate we are scarcely conscious of it. Pain and evil, on the contrary, being exceptional, strike the imagination with a vividness disproportionate to their real importance. And the false impression which we thus derive from personal experience is commonly heightened rather than corrected by reading and study. History, as commonly related, is largely a record of pernicious intrigue, oppression, carnage, and catastrophe. The reign of an Antoninus, as Gibbon tells us, furnishes but few materials for it. It is the same in fiction and the drama; the more normal and agreeable phases of existence are largely ignored. So long as affairs flow smoothly and pleasantly there is comparatively little to edify or interest us. Character and passion are not exhibited in those insipid details. And the news of the day, retailed for vulgar appetites, is chiefly of homicides, crimes, accidents, litigation, and the perpetual wrangling and mainly dishonourable strife of partisans. Death alone is a large part of life as it is painted to us; yet every man who dies in a moment has lived and loved, and upon the whole, we may hope, enjoyed, for many years. It happens unfortunately, too, that the most thoughtful persons—those who make

literature—are, as a rule, the most prone to despondency. Excessive study or meditation impairs the vital energies, and thus darkens one's outlook upon the universe.

Many are greatly impressed with the sufferings of animals, and imagine the lower creation as presenting a scene of perpetual carnage and terror. Nothing can be more absurd. The inferior species, which are produced in such countless myriads only to perish immediately, having no centralised nervous system, are presumably without connected consciousness. In the higher races the death agony, when more than momentary, is still brief in comparison with the duration of consciousness, and is never extended, as in our own case, by the horrors of anticipation. On this point we have the authority of the foremost of naturalists. "When we reflect," says Charles Darwin, "upon this struggle for existence, we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply." Death, that is to say, is the elimination at the cost of a brief suffering of those least fitted for enjoyment.

If death, in the physical scheme, be unavoidable, the mode of it, if rather by sudden violence than by slow decay and starvation, is surely no aggravation of the evil.

To most persons of sensibility there arrives

sooner or later a great sorrow which blasts their hopes and dries up for a time the sources of enjoyment. But such tribulations are usually temporary, and it is but a small portion of our lives which is so consumed. They are like fires upon the moorland, which blacken small tracts only: the vegetation soon springs up again, first the sober greensward, and anon the yellow gorse and broom and purple heath. If, however, the burden be really intolerable, death soon comes to relieve us.

It is not to be denied, indeed, that there are evils affecting a minority of the human race—as, *e.g.*, extreme poverty, unhappy marriages, crime and remorse—which, at the worst, may darken the whole course of their mundane existence and render it upon the whole, and permanently, distasteful or terrible. But these conditions are mostly peculiar to our species, and, being incidental to our superior, yet still rudimentary, intellectual and moral development, may themselves serve, when viewed in the light of the general benevolent scheme of things, as an indication of a possible higher destiny in store for us. To speak generally, this higher destiny would seem to be indicated by the disproportion between men's actual and potential attainments. In mankind, and in mankind alone, there is "an over-provision of faculty whose promise is constantly baulked" by a dissolution which must always be untimely save when it is anticipated

by a decay which must always be premature. We are not like fruits, which when ripened are filled with sweetness and substance to the measure of their capacity. It is much if we can give some slight indication of the possibilities latent in each one of us: the physical envelope then bursts, and further development in that condition becomes impossible.

We picture to ourselves life, at the best, as a bright foreground with a background of darkness, vacuity, and horror: like persons crouching with closed shutters over a nocturnal fireside, enlivening or stupefying themselves with ale, narcotics, and conversation. But that darkness may be only the dim borderland, beyond whose rim shine the eternal sunbeams. We do not have to live in it, but only to pass through it some day. Just imagine if suffering had been the normal form of consciousness, that which resulted from the organic mechanism when regularly adjusted and working without hitch or friction, that which tended to perpetuate itself, and not, as it is, merely Nature's monitor and medicinary discipline! But it so happens fortunately that pain itself tends to bring about the remedy of those mal-adjustments which give rise to it; or if such remedy be not available and the mal-adjustment be otherwise incurable, death, the universal remedy, quickly supervenes.

"Bodily pain is superficial, seated usually in the skin and extremities, for the sake of giving

us warning, to put us on our guard; not in the vitals, where the rupture that produces death is perhaps not felt, and the victim never knew what hurt him." The horror and agony of death are in general greatly exaggerated. Its approaches, when gradual, are softened by the decay of sensibility both bodily and mental. The experiences have been recorded of many who had in a manner actually passed into that "valley of shadow" and returned at the last moment: they were, in many instances, blissful in the extreme.

"But life is unjust: men are not rewarded and punished according to their deserts."—Well, we suspect Nature is not concerned ultimately about rewards and punishments; but only with the development of virtue, and with rewards and punishments as one means to this end. Love does not desire retribution, but reformation. The Cause of Phenomena has never any hatred of persons, but only of actions and qualities: we must not attribute to Him our resentments, even though in ourselves quite reasonable and justifiable. Generally speaking, nevertheless, goodness is wisdom, and selfishness folly. Self-seeking men prosper, but are seldom the most happy. As to the rewards of virtue there is much misapprehension. Its essence being forgetfulness of self except as related to universality, how could this be adequately recompensed with merely personal emoluments and honours? Shall praise delight him who is free from vanity? All such

things are become distasteful or comparatively indifferent. But love—not egoistic passion or liking, which is dependent upon reciprocation, but altruistic benevolence, is truly its own reward: both immediately, because it glows in us like wine in our veins, making the heart glad, and because of the share which it gives us in the life of others, whereby our own life is indefinitely enlarged and enriched. But it is probable, indeed, that this love, to be present in any fulness and perfection, must be drawn immediately from the universal fountain; and in that case to speak of ulterior rewards is evidently superfluous and, indeed, absurd.

Were life bounded by the duration of the physical body, still the great majority would have nothing to complain of. But as it happens there is no real presumption, in despite of superficial appearances, that we are thus limited.

Consciousness, as ordinarily known to us, is associated with cerebral changes, and varies concomitantly with them: it is rightly called, therefore, a function of brain. Does the brain in truth generate, produce or 'secrete,' or does it merely *transmit* consciousness, determining at the same time, or partly determining, its form and character?[1] Is consciousness, apart from brain, truly non-existent, or is it simply unmanifested in the material world? A musical pipe transmits air, a stained glass window light.

[1] *Vide* William James, *Human Immortality*; F. C. S. Schiller, *Riddles of the Sphinx*.

In addition, the air blown through the pipes, vibrating in certain determinate ways, becomes audible as music, the ether visible to those within the building as a coloured pattern or picture. Even so, perhaps, consciousness, pre-existent in a world of pure spirit, transmitted through a brain, takes on certain definite limitations which, *pro tempore*, constitute a personality; and manifests its presence and character to other personalities through the organic machinery. That the brain itself produces or 'secretes' consciousness: of that you have no evidence. It determines it (partially at any rate) and limits its manifestation, we know well and must admit; but why multiply the miracle? That material motion should produce consciousness is surely not easy, but if we will reflect upon it, very difficult to conceive of. That one mode of motion, as heat, should become transformed into another, as electricity, light, magnetism, is to a certain extent intelligible and easily credible; but that motion should produce thought! "It is as great a miracle as if we said, Thought is spontaneously generated or created out of nothing."

Consciousness then, having pre-existed, may survive the dissolution of the body. But there is still the question, How can individuality, personality, survive? Is not this at least due to the particular determinations and movements of cerebral tissue in virtue of which we are such as we are, and have such special thoughts and

feelings as we have? Partly so at any rate. Nevertheless what permanent limitations and connections direct or indirect may or may not have established themselves in the meantime in our consciousness, what powers and potentialities may have been created, other than those which depend upon brain tissue, we cannot tell and are absolutely ignorant; but to suppose gratuitously that there cannot be such immaterial connections and determinations, such purely psychic faculties and capacities, is most absurd.[1] Once admit that of the energy consumed in our bodies during the production of mental processes some portion is not restored again to the material universe, but

[1] Myers (*Human Personality*) quotes thus from Professor Theodore Flournoy of Geneva:—"It is obvious that the hypothesis of spirits involves no *a priori* impossibility or absurdity. It does not even contradict, as is sometimes supposed, that fundamental law of physiological psychology — the psycho-physical parallelism—which insists that every mental phenomenon must have a physical correlative. For in spite of our habit of considering the molecular or atomic phenomena of the brain, the catabolism of the neurones, as the true concomitant of the conscious processes, it is quite possible—it is even probable enough—that these molecular movements do not constitute the ultimate physical term immediately adjoining the mental world (*coïncidant le monde mental*), but that the true physical or spacial correlatives of psychological or non-spatial phenomena ought to be sought in the vibrations of that imponderable matter, the ether, in which ponderable atoms and molecules are plunged somewhat after the fashion of grains of dust in the atmosphere."

On this Mr. Myers comments, that "the great mystery of existence is only just beginning, in that inconceivable world of ether, precisely where our utmost analysis fails us, and our mathematics are reduced to a jungle of infinities and contradictions." The world of ether, indeed, in regard to the existence of a spiritual universe, is but the first of infinite possibilities.

passes into the Unseen; admit the existence in us of a spiritual principle, not a mere by-product of matter, but an intelligent causal agent, of whose operations however our normal or 'supra-liminal' consciousness is not always cognisant; the existence of a spiritual universe acting upon and reacted upon by this principle: admit any of these things, and anything is possible. We may, for instance, imagine the building up, coincidently with that of our material body, of a spiritual organism or thought-body of some kind, whereof the parts have their own cohesion, and such as can draw to itself and assimilate from a metetherial or spiritual environment, as even now perhaps it does, fresh material and energy.

"Each thought we think is accompanied by certain molecular motions and displacements in the brain; and parts of these, let us allow, are in some way stored up in that organ, so as to produce what may be termed our material or physical memory. Other parts of these motions are, however, communicated to the invisible body, and are there stored up, forming a memory which may be made use of when that body is free to exercise its functions."[1] Thus it follows that "Thought conceived to affect the matter of another universe simultaneously with this may explain a future state."

It is a vain argument that mankind, having the same origin with the rest of the animal creation,

[1] Stewart and Tait, *The Unseen Universe.*

cannot have a destiny apart from these, and consequently must be destined to annihilation. Every animal which has a connected consciousness and memory (those, that is, which have an adequately developed and centralised nervous system) has possibly a soul: for this soul is nothing else than such a consciousness conceived as partly independent of the body, and capable of surviving its dissolution. The survival of a personality, however, has nothing to do with the question of its origin; but depends presumably upon the nature of its development and interactions with an unseen environment, and consequent powers of 'correspondence' with that environment on its departure from the physical universe.

That one was crucified nineteen centuries ago, and not so long afterwards was believed to have appeared subsequently upon several occasions to certain of his disciples; that some of these asserted that he was seen of above five hundred of them at one time; that the great body of them were found willing to stake everything upon this their conviction of his resurrection: these are facts of the highest importance, indeed, to the pious consciousness of believers, but the significance of which is chiefly matter of religious faith, and cannot be gauged now with certainty by the scientific intelligence. It may, however, at least be fairly contended that the reality of the essential facts thus enthusiastically acclaimed and believed (however inaccurately interpreted and

reported) is becoming every day scientifically less improbable in the light of analogous modern occurrences.

Of possible scientific evidence pointing directly to the immaterial nature of the soul, and even to its continued personal existence after bodily dissolution, there have been in all ages sporadic manifestations; but the reality and importance of the phenomena in question have been generally unsuspected or discredited, until quite recently, in modern scientific circles. At present however some portion of the alleged facts having been critically investigated and sifted and a certain residuum of them, in despite of much *à priori* prejudice, admitted as genuine amongst well-informed people, the question is mainly as to the interpretation of this residuum.

That the mind has faculties not originating in terrestrial evolution nor dependent in any way (unless negatively) upon physical conditions, is clearly indicated, if not definitely established. Once, or once or twice only in his lifetime, one sees the "apparition" or hallucinatory image of a person not present, which person is ascertained subsequently to have died at or about the very time of the hallucination. Coincidence will not account for such facts as this, which are common, often very well attested, and not explicable by physical causes. This power to project, so to speak, a phantasm of one's self, or to cause other hallucinatory perceptions in the minds of other

persons, is evidently not physical.[1] The immaterial soul itself exhibits this energy, often for the first time, when actually emergent, if not already liberated, from corporeal limitations, or when the physical capabilities are otherwise reduced to a minimum, as during trance or sleep. It is no consequence of evolution: these are powers of another and suprasensuous world.

When now, as often happens, the person whose apparition is seen is undeniably deceased and his body buried in the earth, there is still a certain presumption that his personality has survived and may be the cause of that hallucination; and this presumption is greatly strengthened when, as in certain well-established instances, the hallucination is definitely purposeful and informative of facts not known to living persons, but, as it would seem, to the deceased only.

Of trance-utterance, 'automatic writing,' providential leadings and kindred marvels we say little at present. It is apparent that such matters

[1] "What sort of system of vibrations or of emitted particles can this be that, regardless of distance, acting across oceans and continents or through the body of the solid earth, can produce so detailed a repetition in one brain of the movements taking place in another as the case would require? Above all, what adequate account can be given on mechanical principles of the selective action of telepathy—as exhibited, for instance, in the many cases in which the telepathic effect seems to follow, as it were, the direction of the agent's thought, and influence some particular person for whom it was intended, or to whom it conveys a message of special significance?" Right Hon. G. W. Balfour in *Hibbert Journal*, April 1910. To the same effect also, Sir Oliver Lodge *Survival of Man* (p. 116)

are not yet compassed by any single hypothesis, nor perhaps by any combination of them. Telepathy and subliminal mentation are useful, but inadequate. The land-locked consciousness of mortals is divided from its mother-sea by only a thin bar of sand: sometimes "an exceptional wave flows over the dam." The reality, much more the identity, of alleged communicating spirits is generally most dubious or incredible; yet attains now and again to a degree of plausibility which almost persuades us. Meantime to certain 'sensitives' even the sceptical must grant powers of selective mind-reading, clairvoyance, retrocognition, and occasionally even of prevision, which seem hardly susceptible of physical explanation. Of the making of hypotheses there is no end. One ancient hypothesis meanwhile is dead, or dying, amongst the well-informed—that of materialism.

What results may emerge finally from a truly comprehensive investigation of all such phenomena we do not venture to predict. For the present at any rate genuine evidences of communication from departed personalities are certainly too scanty and precarious, while on the other hand extensions of human faculty are very strongly suggested of a kind wholly meaningless and inexplicable, unless they are to be regarded as embryonic in relation to a future disembodied existence. It may well be that possibly the question of the survival of personality will

remain always for strict science a debateable one, while on the other hand persons willing to believe will find still, notwithstanding many disappointments, more or less of reasonable encouragement for their hopes. Meantime however the hope of immortality is not at the disposal of individuals, but is the property of humanity. We are bound to respect and sustain it, even though for ourselves personally such an aspiration may be without attraction. There are persons who tell us they cannot imagine anything which could compensate for the intolerable burden of a never-ending existence; but these should remember that it is not a question of what they can just now desire or imagine, but of what is ultimately desirable. Desire and imagination depend upon past experience, and the former also upon temperament, and felt capacity for enjoyment. But past experience is not the measure of possible good, and temperament might be changed materially with the casting off of this diseased body.

That the disciplinary justice which prevails here and now will be continued in much greater perfection under future conditions is not difficult to conjecture. It follows immediately from the principle of (psychic) continuity. We have but to consider, that all lower sensual gratifications will be impossible to us in a disembodied state; that the external emoluments which at present so often attend upon the efforts of selfishness will have been confiscated; that nothing will remain to us

but ourselves, with such internal riches of character and intellect as we may have here accumulated; that the thoughts and feelings of our hearts will be widely, if not universally, manifest and legible: to see at once that upon our present faithful endeavours must depend largely any fitness for advancement to the spheres and societies of the blest. The wicked will be then naked and ashamed, weeping in outer darkness, consumed with unavailing regrets and hopeless longings, until such time as they may have become purified by suffering.

The evolution of a solar system is the preparation of a theatre for the gradual incarnation of spirit and the slow development from this latter of an infinitely perfectible being.

> "All tended to mankind
> And, man produced, all has its end thus far;
> But in completed man begins anew
> A tendency to God."

Nature then, having laboured for æons to produce this masterpiece, will not destroy him, but remains still for ages subservient to his spiritual development. The planets then perish, having served their turn. But the harvest of souls is not yet, man's perfectibility being, as we have said, infinite. The most advanced man upon this planet is perhaps but a soul in embryo (as already hinted), the material body being as it were the egg from which Nature hatches him. And if we admit this, that subsequently his

development goes on indefinitely in new spheres, what is the end of it? Re-absorption, the loss of individuality, the undoing of the age-long work of creation and redemption? Not that surely. We were detached from the Infinite, not for re-absorption, but for service and communion.

Sick minds, tired literary, sedentary, and dyspeptic persons, desire extinction, which they call "eternal rest." They cannot imagine an endless existence without endless satiety and weariness. Rest however is not the extinction, but at most the suspension of consciousness. So long as there is weariness, doubtless there will be rest; but rest is not a desirable condition save in so far as it is conscious, or recuperative. Satiety, again, may be due solely to an over-stimulated nervous system; the penalty is in any case indispensable at present for progressive beings, that they may be led on constantly to seek those new experiences which are necessary to their development. But a spirit once perfected might be incapable of satiety, and so fitted for everlasting happiness. It is remarkable that religious persons, those, that is, who have a consciousness of the Divine, never complain of this kind of weariness, unless in respect of merely worldly enjoyments: which would seem to indicate that these have attained already to a fore-taste of their true and permanent good.

Man, whose destiny is spiritual, can never be permanently contented with a system of merely

natural phenomena. For while, on the one hand, when he considers it impartially, he is obliged to admit the admirableness of this system—a world spun from the entrails of benevolence—nevertheless he is conscious, dimly or clearly, that it is not adapted to the satisfaction of his deepest needs. He finds in it, moreover, a twofold precariousness, both inward and outward. Opportunities, friends and lovers fail: or suppose him fortunate in all respects, the mind loses its freshness, the faculties of feeling decay, leaving him cold, weary, and disillusioned. But this, and worse afflictions are no reason for doubting of Providence: we learn only that we have here no continuing city. Our true life is not here even now, if we could find it, not in this world of phenomena physical and mental, but "hid with Christ in God."

CHAPTER V

BEAUTY

"For the world is not painted, or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the universe."—EMERSON.

MODERN empiricists, seeking to analyse the beautiful, have concluded that this is nothing more than a name for a great variety of heterogeneous qualities or relations which have nothing in common except the fact of a certain general resemblance in the feelings which they excite, or may excite, in the minds of those who perceive them. And further, this power of exciting æsthetic emotion, it is found, is by no means always permanent, never essential to the objects, but more or less variable and fugitive, depending upon subjective conditions and idiosyncrasies often wholly accidental and fleeting. The æsthetic judgments of different individuals, races, and epochs, and even of the same individual at different times, are various and often conflicting. In the fine arts there are certain recognised or traditional standards, not however undisputed or wholly fixed and immutable. But it is to be

feared that the appreciation of works of reputed excellence is in too many instances largely owing to prescriptive authority and the subtle influence of suggestion: and these notwithstanding, the degree of pleasure or admiration actually produced is by no means always proportional to such excellence.

The mind of the youthful and earnest investigator, full of love and veneration, but also of analytical curiosity, is apt to be greatly disturbed by this discovery of what seems the merely relative, subjective, and fluxional nature of his ideal. The old Platonic enthusiasm, bursting forth anew in every such poetic and thoughtful intellect, is chilled and almost stifled in its infancy. Beauty, it seems, exists only in the percipient mind, or, as a property of objects, is always relative to the mind; and how can we worship that which is in a manner but the creation of our own sensibility?

The question, it must be allowed, is neither trivial nor merely curious, but concerns the very basis of religion itself, and of art, science, and poetry so far as these are more than cults of pleasure: for there is nothing that is an object of worship, veneration, or admiration, that is not resolvable into some form of beauty or sublimity, physical, intellectual, or moral. And it is evident indeed that those persons who have no high faith in the beautiful and the sublime are at a great disadvantage even from a purely hedonistic

standpoint. They must be considered as spiritually impotent and incapable of the highest forms of enjoyment.

Now first with regard to the variability of ideas of beauty, it is easy to fall into exaggeration. In the first place there are certain primary sensibilities of the organism which are normal to humanity, depending in many instances upon fixed mathematical ratios. Thus it is well known that the harmony of combined musical tones depends upon the simplicity of numerical proportions in their rates of vibration; and it has been shown plausibly that similar laws govern the proportions of good architecture, and of the human face and figure when formed, as we say, regularly. In general the beauties of nature, as distinguished from those of art, are appreciated to some extent by all persons of the least refinement, and it is only a question of the degrees of sensibility. The sunlight, the blue firmament, the free air and many-tinted clouds, the mountains, the clear waters reflecting the landscape, the trees and flowers, the shining boundless ocean with its waves moving eternally, sounding eternally upon the strand, the solemn canopy of night, and the revolving spheres: all these appeal more or less strongly to every soul that has advanced beyond barbarism. Intellectual achievement and ability is admired universally as soon as its nature is understood. Moral excellence and useful self-devotion are venerated, according to

the degrees of social evolution, *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus*: we have only to except certain diseased personalities at war with Nature, whom Nature casts out through the sores which they themselves have made upon the surface of her body.

There are works of human art which we call immortal, because they are a delight to cultivated persons in all ages. In so far as they are less so to most of us than possibly some inferior productions of our own epoch, that is mainly because of our imperfect knowledge and defective imagination. The full appreciation of such works is always difficult, because notwithstanding certain bold features the unchanging humanity of which all must recognize, the greater part of what is in them is not usually perceptible without close and long continued study, not merely of the works themselves but also of their historic relations, the circumstances and mental climate under which they were produced. A mere cold appreciation of the circumstances by the understanding is not sufficient: it is necessary to live again the bygone times in the imagination and feeling, which no one can fully attain to. What modern can realise fully the tragic power of the great masterpieces of Æschylus and Sophocles—*e.g.* the Œdipus Tyrannus—as these impressed an audience of Athenians? It must be admitted indeed that such works are mostly conceived and executed upon a loftier intellectual and artistic plane than the great majority can at any time rise into.

As to suggestion, it is not to be denied that we owe much to this influence. When we hear a work praised enthusiastically this enthusiasm is "catching." Yet it is probable that, strictly speaking, nothing is ever imputed in this way that was not actually existent, constituted by pre-established relations between ourselves and the object. The feeling evoked may be disproportionate in some instances to what would have been possible, suggestion apart; but those relations are none the less the indispensable conditions of such feeling, without which we should be left coldly wondering and irresponsive: just as no substance can be ignited unless by virtue of its affinity for some supporter of combustion.

If we analyse the conditions of the beautiful, we shall find some of them are universal, or normal to human nature, others accidental and consequently variable.

First as to purely sensational beauty: this depends upon organic sensibilities which, though varying to a certain extent in different individuals, nevertheless approach more or less closely to normal types. Thus, for example, the preference for curved and flowing lines, smooth surfaces, symmetrical proportions, harmonious combinations of sound (those, that is, whose rates of vibration are related according to the simplest numerical ratios), is practically universal. Of colours, some are enlivening, others sobering or soothing to the

nerves; and of this probably every one is sensible to some extent.

As a fact, however, this purely sensuous beauty is largely an abstraction, and there are generally, if not always, other factors which are contributory. This at least is always the case where the emotion is at all appreciable. The beautiful, we suspect, is never wholly without symbolism or suggestiveness to the imagination. Thus curved lines and smooth surfaces suggest to us an easy, free, and uninterrupted motion; symmetry tells of order, agreement, equilibrium; physical harmony is typical of mental and moral; colours, according to their gaiety, soberness, richness, etc., may be expressive of corresponding mental qualities and conditions, and when delicately or tastefully blended and shaded, of refinement, absence of restraint, pleasing variety or contrast, infinity, and so forth. A curved line which does not return into itself expresses freedom: "should the curve, however, with an equal radius return into itself, and become a circle, it loses measurably its beauty as a symbol of freedom, yet acquires a new element of perfection in its completeness and its harmonious implications. It is the absolute reverse of all disorder, hence of all irritation, and rich in suggestions of the possibilities of the perfect life." In architecture, the first essential is fitness and stability, with its attendant feeling of safety—as, in the classic orders, that column and base should appear precisely adequate to

the support of the entablature, so that nothing be deficient or superfluous. The conditions of physical beauty in the great majority at least of its manifestations have, we think, been correctly generalised thus:—they consist, namely, in the suggestion of some element or elements in a more perfect human existence.[1] Let us consider a more complex example, say the performance upon a cathedral organ of some grand fugal composition of J. S. Bach or Handel. Here we have expressed in harmonious combination all the chief elements in the most desirable kind of energetic activity:—perfect freedom and joyousness, transcendent power and fulness; the independent and harmonious co-operation of individuals, great variety and complexity, yet always with regularity and orderly obedience and unity of plan only relieved by episodical movements never wholly out of relation to the principal theme; an interest constantly sustained and in general constantly increasing till it reaches the climax and full close of fruition; the whole permeated by a subtle and grave sweetness, and majesty, and deep religious earnestness, not the less pleasing for its unobtrusive and joyful spontaneity—what wonder that the intelligent and idealistic hearer is so powerfully stirred!

Physical nature abounds everywhere with this suggestiveness, and nothing is required for its detection but an active and cultivated imagination.

[1] J. S. Kedney, *The Beautiful and the Sublime.*

Thus beauty is the promise of God impressed upon his works: from the fine symmetry of snow-flakes to the sunset radiance, wherein we behold as it were the far-shining of an infinite glory in the destiny of the soul.

So far, then, beauty may be said to be universal in its relation to human nature. It is true this relation is to the norm or standard nature tends to, and as respects individuals is largely only potential. Individual appreciation, that is, depends upon the development of the personal ideal of the desirable life, and also upon the activity and fertility of imagination in detecting symbols thereof. If this ideal be exclusively or predominantly physical the appreciation will be inadequate, the higher or spiritual expressiveness of things being unnoticed or powerless to move. In so far, too, as men are attracted by forms of enjoyment which are inconsistent with or inimical to the true and highest universal happiness, will their æsthetic tastes also be false and unworthy.

The suggestion of perfection, it is true, will not cover all cases. Thus beauty results, for example, whenever through the medium of melodious tones or words, or even through the incoherent sighing of wind or waters, human emotion is expressed or reflected, even though vaguely: and albeit the former element (the suggestion of perfection, that is) is still present here, if only in the physical agreeableness of the sounds—for these, however expressive, must not be unpleasing to the ear—

yet this alone will not account for the effect. The feeling suggested is not necessarily itself of a directly desirable kind: more often perhaps it is not so much itself an element of the desirable life, but has rather the character of aspiration or longing for some phase of that existence, which need not be clearly defined to the imagination, or of pity or sorrow for its untimely loss or unattainableness (beauty of pathos). In the arts beauty results from the direct successful imitation of nature, and it is only necessary that what is represented or depicted be not itself altogether disagreeable or even wholly trivial and uninteresting. At bottom, however, it is always human life or humanity, and nothing else, which interests us. We stand like Narcissus enamoured of our own image, whether reflected in the pools of nature or in the mirrors of art. Artistic beauty, we must add, can hardly be considerable without a high degree of selection and idealism. Here again therefore we find aspiration. "Poetry accommodates the shows of things to the desires of the mind."

But thirdly, taste is often powerfully affected or modified by divers accidental influences, the chief of which are, familiarity or novelty, chance moods, suggestion and sympathy, and last and chiefly, accidental association. When an object has been connected in our thoughts, or in past experience, with other ideas, or impressions themselves æsthetically interesting and pleasing, the

charm is apt to be transferred in our m nds to the object itself; and this secondary attractiveness, subjectively, is itself really indistinguishable from the beautiful, being distinguished from it, if at all, only objectively, with reference to the accidental nature of its origin, and in deference to a conventional standard. Accordingly an unreflecting person will tell you naïvely there is no scenery equal to that of his native land or province, no music or poetry like certain melodies heard or stanzas learned in childhood, no architecture like that of the building wherein he worships, or even of the house he was born in. The special charm which invests places celebrated in song or legend is not merely in those associations, but is as it were actually a certain mild splendour which hangs over the landscape. It is not necessary that those connected thoughts should come again definitely into the mind upon every occasion. The very names of, for example, certain rivers—Yarrow, Ayr, Rhine, Tiber, Simois, Scamander—are to us as a strain of music.

So again in the familiar instance of fashion in clothes. A person dressed modishly is dressed actually to that extent more becomingly in the eyes of his contemporaries,—which seems to be an effect mainly of personal and caste associations. In every instance, it will be noted, the charm does not attach itself merely to the thoughts connected with the object, but belongs immediately to our idea of it, and is only separable from it by logical

abstraction. Hence the judgment of uncritical persons is apt to be, as we say, led astray by it.

But the truth is evidently, this associational beauty, adventitious and accidental as it is, is just as real while it lasts, and may be just as legitimate and valuable, as any other. So far as objects are concerned it is after all not really the universality or permanence of the relation that matters. Philosophically speaking beauty is beauty, for the time being, wherever it is felt as such. Its *esse* is *sentiri*. Nor does this mean that there is no standard. There are, as we apprehend, certain qualities eternally admirable, and others which are not so; nor can anything be an object really of admiration (we do not say of liking) to anyone unless in virtue of something admirable which it contains, or which is erroneously attributed to it, or through association, by transference (originally at any rate) from something else that is admirable. In particular, that which is immoral can never be beautiful *as such*. It is true of course that one may admire a thing that is really bad, morally bad, and therefore ugly. But what he in truth admires, what is really beautiful to him, is not the thing itself, but his idea of it,—and it will be found probably that in every case the cause of this admiration, wherever traceable, is in fact something beautiful, though not really present in the object save as he conceives of it, or if present, still vitiated and overcast by moral ugliness to which he perhaps may be indifferent or insensible. It is

his idea of the thing that is, objectively speaking, incorrect or inadequate, and immoral: but this idea in his mind may be none the less, and consequently upon its very inaccuracy, in itself beautiful.

This should teach us toleration, within certain limits—in purely æsthetical questions, that is, according to the proverb, *de gustibus non est disputandum.* All impressions and thoughts are beautiful for the nonce when they are felt as such, but the charm belongs not in reality to any particular object, but only to qualities or relations, and is an effluence which comes we know not whence unless from the soul of the universe. It is only beauty itself that is absolutely admirable, and not any particular thing in which it resides temporarily. Thus the same simple and rude productions of art which serve for the edification of children and uncultivated persons are commonplace and trivial in the eyes of connoisseurs, or even reprehensible, by reason of the imperfections which they discern in them. Now it is of course quite right and desirable that taste should be cultivated and men's minds raised gradually to the contemplation and intelligent appreciation of higher forms, more intricate, refined and spiritual; but this cannot be done all at once, and in the meantime each one must resort to such sources of inspiration as are immediately available for him.

All beauty is alike real, though fleeting, whensoever and wheresoever it passes even

momentarily through the mind of anyone. Beauty too is always moral, or not immoral; though often associated, both subjectively and externally, with what is immoral. Thus an illicit love connection may involve actually much that is fair and noble, and none the less, when regarded from any comprehensive and reasonable standpoint, must be considered as thoroughly reprehensible, deplorable, and un-beautiful. We hear only the song of the Sirens and perceive not the bones of dead men strewn around upon the meadows.

Beauty, as a property of objects and as known to us empirically, is in every case simply a relation, which may be more or less general and permanent or merely special and temporary. But it is not this relation and its greater or less extensiveness that is mainly in question, not the relation that is intrinsically of consequence, but the *glory in the mind* which results from it: and the question is as to this glory, whether it be in truth a meaningless accident or product of mere phenomena, or in some sort an emanation or self-realisation in our souls of the universal soul of nature or ultimate reality.

How is it that the stirrings of this emotion are in general so capricious and unaccountable? The pageant of nature passes daily before us; we read whole cantos of poetry: yet the imagination is not touched. We perceive the elegance and prettiness of things, but have little or no enjoy-

ment from them. Then one day some trifle catches the fancy: a fragment of an old ballad or song of Burns, a happy metaphor or snatch of melody, a recollection of Swiss mountains, the rumour of an heroic speech or action. "The eye fixes and gazes into vacancy," or fills with tears: we are away upon the ocean of infinity. We go forth: the glory is again upon the landscape and covers all things. The chest heaves, face and figure are distorted, but the mind within is all resplendent. Set free from the restraining influence of all temporal cares and attractions we are now drawn into line by the universal magnet and the currents of eternal song flow through us. All doubt as to the real existence of infinite perfection is for the time being impossible to us.

The first maxim in ontology is to get rid of the obscurantism of second causes. It matters nothing though we should trace all the subtle mental, not to speak of cerebral and visceral, conditions which precede or accompany and make possible this exaltation. Even in physics a second cause, or any conjunction of them, in reality explains nothing, nor ever can: a law, at the best, can only be explained in terms of some higher or more ultimate law (say, for example, gravitation), and those ultimate ones will always remain inexplicable. Much more in spiritual things: an antecedent perhaps no more produces its consequent than the links of a chain or meshes of a net produce one another. (The links

of a chain may draw, but do not create one another, and passing successively across the field of vision, tell us nothing of the powers which forged them.) This is the true lamp of Psyche, the profane foolishness, namely, of seeking to explain by empirical analysis transcendent mysteries: by this method we shall see nothing clearly, but only hear the sound of the god's pinions as he flees from us and leaves us disconsolate.

In any analysis that we make of the external and mental conditions of the beautiful, it is not beauty itself that we have traced and dissected, but only at the most certain causes or occasions of its manifestation to the human mind. The emotion of beauty is not resolvable into any other and prior feelings, but is in itself something quite new, *sui generis* and wonderful. 'Mental chemistry' might conceivably account for it—as water, for example, is something quite different from oxygen *plus* hydrogen—: a mere mixture it certainly is not, not being constituted by its antecedents. But what, after all, *is* chemistry; since the qualities of compounds are not contained for the most part in those of their constituent elements? Or, to take a more promising analogue, what is life? Let us suppose that we should have found veritably some day its physical basis or pre-conditions. We must still hold none the less that the effect is not really the result of those observable or inferrible antecedents, but a new manifestation in the phenomenal world

of a power not phenomenal which the preceding phenomena have not produced, but only rendered possible. Biologists, in tracing the slow development from a primeval slime of the most complex of organisms, still cannot banish from their speculations, if they would give a reasonable account of the matter, an ever-working, intelligent, and aspiring formative principle which is the real basis of this development, however much aided and operating by mechanical and chemical processes. "Can that be a non-entity," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "which has built up particles of carbon and hydrogen and oxygen into the form of an oak or an eagle or a man?" So again with consciousness, *a fortiori*. This at any rate not only is not yet explained, but never can be explicable, in terms of matter or material forces. Physiologists do but show the conditions under which normally its existence is manifested through material phenomena. The thing itself remains always to the end a divine mystery, of divinely mysterious origin. Consciousness, then, is not material. And is it always purely 'natural,' purely individual and isolated? How is it that certain emotional experiences, and the emotion of beauty in particular when raised to a certain intensity, should impress us veritably as a supernatural illumination? Words never can describe this insight, which is not of the understanding. To ourselves at least, in certain wonderful moments, we seem actually to have penetrated

into the deep, mystic, infinite heart of Nature, nay rather of what is internal to Nature, into the very holy chamber of true Being or adytum of spiritual Reality. There is nothing surely in the antecedent states of mind, nothing in the merely sensational and emotional causes, that can adequately account for this illusion, if illusion it be. Who shall say but that in this and other strong disturbances of the psychical threshold, the sluices are opened, and some portion of the universal consciousness flows in and thus for the time literally dissolves us in ecstasy?

Beauty at least, and love, we feel, when these possess us, are infinite and eternal, and belong somehow to the essence of things. To the man of faith the universe exists mainly for beauty and for love, which is the enjoyment of the beautiful, and itself also, when consistent with the eternal principles of morality—which again are simply love universal—the highest beauty.

Beauty alone, under one form or another, is the sole object of love, admiration, veneration, and worship. This it is the realisation of which, the means of subsistence being once assured to them, men chiefly aim at; so to surround and clothe themselves with it, and those whom they love, in body and spirit, that these together with themselves may have the enjoyment of it and be themselves objects of love, admiration, and veneration. But this which becomes, under one form or another, for man the supremely desirable

and only admirable thing, is the very thing which characterises most universally objective nature in its relation to him. We must discern then in Nature this purpose, not so much to produce beauty, for that she does spontaneously and in all her workings from the beginning, but to produce a soul that shall be in harmony with herself and capable of worship. This end she accomplishes only laboriously, through secular processes, with unnumbered pains and throes of anguish; but the former without effort and in inexhaustible abundance and variety. The beauty of the world is "the free play and efflorescence of the Divine Glory." We also, who love beauty, are friends of God, and immortal, as Plato taught.

It is easy to say, that beauty being dependent (for example) upon aspiration, and sublimity in particular upon dynamical or moral inferiority or a sense of ideal expansion of one kind or another, these emotions are out of the question and impossible for an infinite and perfect being. But here again we are blinding ourselves with second causes. The æsthetic emotion, let us admit, has originated in human minds, in some instances at any rate, after that fashion, and so far is dependent upon those conditions, that is upon aspiration. But it is not aspiration, nor expansion, that is the essence of the feeling (though often confounded with it), but disinterested admiration, love, and pure joy. We then, in

ascribing this passion to the Infinite Being, are not guilty in respect of anthropomorphism, but rather those who unduly limit the qualities of incomprehensible Divinity are guilty of it; as if beauty could not be eternal, and could only come into existence after that particular manner in which it has been produced in our experience, being manufactured, as is supposed, out of inferior psychical elements. The truth is, of course, that the mode in which beauty exists absolutely, or in the mind of Divinity, is to mortal minds for ever an impenetrable mystery. All we can say is, that beauty being an universal tendency and only so much ugliness being permitted anywhere as seems necessary for the sake of contrast or for human education, the former quality must belong somehow to the spiritual and world-producing original of things, as a workman is known by his handiwork; and this being the object, under one form or another, of the most exalted sentiment and most passionate and profound heart-stirrings of which our nature is capable, will not be degraded into the condition of a mere means for our temporal enjoyment or encouragement, but takes place as the supreme end and cause of the world-process.

But in truth, if the mode in which beauty exists absolutely be incomprehensible to us, its production in human evolution is after all scarcely less so, all analysis notwithstanding. Just as in the development of the physical universe life and

consciousness are not generated out of material elements, but pre-exist, and (as we apprehend) pressing everywhere, so to speak, like an atmosphere upon the surfaces of the material universe, pass in at once wheresoever there is prepared a vessel fitted to receive them, even so, possibly, love and beauty, at least in certain of their higher manifestations, are not produced from inferior mental elements, but percolate as if by a spiritual osmosis through the membrane of our dull consciousness as soon as it is refined enough. The elements in question—imaginative longing for some element in a more enjoyable existence, detection of utility or fitness for the ends of this existence, or of a humane expressiveness, in external nature, ideal association, etc. etc.,—all these are at most but the psychological ova (so to speak) which cannot germinate, and produce fruits of love and worship till they be impregnated by the Holy Spirit. Without this we remain cold and things do not speak effectively to us; and this notwithstanding that our judgment may fully appreciate and approve their qualities. But if it be insisted that all these things, life, consciousness, beauty, love, and worship, are simply effects of their phenomenal antecedents, material or mental, and nothing more, we must say then, this does but prove the purposive and divine character of those antecedents, being foreordained, devised, and combined together, for ends so noble; and those ends, we must still

hold, are pre-existent eternally in the originating cause of all phenomena, which we call Deity and God.

Beauty then is the creator of the world, and Mankind her well-beloved and chosen from eternity. Through long primeval ages untiringly she wooed him with most sweet persuasion. In all his migrations she followed him. She called to him from the pigments of flowers and berries and the gay plumage of winged creatures. She warmed him with sunbeams, and fanned him with cool breezes, and smiled from the skies of summer. Upon green shaded banks she laid out for him soft and firm couches, and sighed to him from the water-courses as she passed by amid the songs of birds. She showed him symmetry and fitness in the forms of organisms, and divine order in the revolutions of the hours and seasons. Morning and evening she displayed to him her glory in the horizon from beyond the hills. At noonday she came down to him upon the sunbeams. "Soul of man!" she said, "thou must love me: for behold, I am lovely." He for his part was well pleased, but, being so gross, he scarcely discerned her as yet. Accordingly, he paid little attention to her more solemn visitations, but continued for a long time diverting himself with trifles, of shape, and colour, and motion, and the rudiments of music. He was pleased also especially with such earthly mistresses as she provided for him, and knew not

her, his benefactress and true mistress of his soul. So having multiplied himself he was concerned for the helplessness of his offspring, for the safety and honour of tribe, nation, and country; and the lustre of his brave deeds seemed to him even as the brightness of his burnished armour. In games and exercises he sought the perfection of manhood, and busied himself in his vocations of love, war, and economy. He learned self-restraint, temperance, forethought, endurance, wisdom; something too of the sweetness of sympathy, renunciation, self-devotion, glory. In the moulding of the physical he discerned the expression of the spiritual, and in both a like quality of admirableness. Beauty then grew more manifest to him, and sang to him in intelligible numbers. "For this cause I made the heavens and the earth, of mine own substance weaving them, and thee, that I might show myself to thee. Henceforth I am no longer elemental only, being united to thee; but shall shine forth yet more gloriously in the qualities of soul."

He knew her at length, and understood that she desired to manifest herself more perfectly, but could not, for the intractableness of material forces: he strove therefore himself through plastic and poetic arts, if by any means he might aid her to a more clear self-expression. Also he prayed daily to the gods: "Grant me that I may become beautiful in the inner man."

CHAPTER VI

HIGHEST GOOD

"Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te."—S. AUGUSTINE.

"He may be an adequate supply to all the faculties of our souls."—BUTLER.

THE keystone of philosophy, we find, is a belief in the real existence of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty as an eternal unity: in their existence, that is to say, not merely as abstractions or as principles realised in particular phenomenal manifestations only, but in an eternal and absolute consciousness and source of all phenomena. But it is just here, however, that a genuine philosophy is unhappily conscious of a degree of impotency. The instruments of conversion and religious conviction are not mainly argumentative. Still it behoves us, having regard to the state of contemporary inquiry, with as much candour as we are capable of, and without employing, at least consciously, any sophistical reasonings, to attempt here what may be possible for us in vindication of the credibility and reasonableness at any rate of this cardinal principle.

Many and various are the objections urged by philosophers and others against the current conceptions of a personal Deity: and it must be admitted that theologians are commonly not a little embarrassed in dealing with them. Such difficulties, however, if we mistake not, arise generally out of the faultiness of their definitions and of traditional assumptions.

The object of worship, in the theology of the orthodox, is the personal Creator and Governor of the universe, and is at the same time absolute, perfect, and infinite. Now the meaning of these latter terms is very dubious and fruitful in difficulties.

It is objected, for example, that a Being perfect, and therefore self-sufficing, absolute, and infinite, could not enter into a relation of creative energy: far less could He become the producer of a universe which, however beautiful, and upon the whole admirable, contains admittedly much imperfection and evil. To this the reply is, first, as to the notion of perfection, as what is best calculated to excite worship and adoration, this does not include self-sufficiency in the sense implied. The term absolute is employed frequently by metaphysicians to mean independent of all relation. But the Being whom our soul is in quest of is very far from any such condition. An absolute, in this sense, would not concern us in any way whatever; and the term, in theology, must be taken to mean simply, that which exists eternally and independently; or the essential

nature of which is not dependent upon human or other variable opinion, but is persistent and unchangeable; or as implying some other conceivable and credible attributes such as are fitted to excite reverence, adoration, and unfailing trust and confidence. So again, there have been actually thinkers of reputation who talked gravely of an abstraction called "the Infinite," meaning infinite in all possible attributes. Such an Infinite must of course be at once all-embracing and incapable of increase, and cannot therefore be conceived as creative: though at the same time it must be infinitely creative. Similarly it must be infinitely good and infinitely evil: and so on. The conception, in fact, is obviously self-contradictory and impossible in all respects, as those philosophers were not slow in discovering. But then no one is required to set up for himself any such unimaginable and impossible idol as this "Infinite." The object of unfailing love, trust, and reverence, needs only to be transcendently, supremely, and unchangeably wise, good, and powerful. For the purposes of pure religion this is sufficient. There is no real problem, consequently, as to an "origin of evil," or as to the incompatibility of an "imperfect" creation with an alleged origin from "perfect" power, wisdom, and goodness. All such difficulties are of our own making, or belong exclusively to the second-hand theories and traditions with which we have needlessly encumbered ourselves.

If we must speak accurately, the notion of perfection without limit would mean nothing less than this, namely, the realisation in infinite degree, both perpetually and from all eternity, of whatsoever is regarded as good, and the non-existence and impossibility of anything evil. This latter is clearly implied, since a perfection strictly limitless could never be tolerant of the existence or even of the possibility of imperfection anywhere. Power and wisdom could only mean here, not creative energy,—for that were needless and motiveless,—but an absence of all restraint or hindrance, whether through limited knowledge or other cause, to a mode of activity in itself purely delightful, and undertaken not for any purpose of improvement, but at the most for the maintenance of a perfect condition of things already existing. An infinite benevolence, conjoined with perfect power and wisdom, must mean a delight without limit in the actual perfect and infinite happiness of conscious existences, which therefore must be infinite either in number or capacity, and must themselves, too, have existed from all eternity in that same perfection of nature and condition, being co-eternal together with the all-sustainer, who could not be the Creator. In a word, this whole notion of perfection without limit is evidently a merely barren and impossible abstraction which, if it be not strictly inconceivable, is none the less objectively incredible and unthinkable in view of the actual

world before us. But, on the other hand, there is nothing, whether in the ideal or in the actual, to hinder the conception of a Being who is at once perfect, that is, pure unmixed Benevolence and perfect Justice: understanding by this latter term, not the will to retaliate upon evil-doers unless with a view to their reformation, which, in truth, would be contrary to benevolence, but simply an entire universality and impartiality in benevolence itself. For justice, as the perfection of virtue, is nothing else than this universality and impartiality in benevolence.

It is a maxim with the Hegelians that God, the universal principle or Absolute Spirit, must be infinite in this sense, that He "contains in Himself all that is actual, even evil included." Such an Infinite, it is suggested, cannot be personal, since personality implies limitation in the shape of a *non-ego*, or other existences distinguishable from the *ego* or self: still less can it be moral or good in any intelligible sense. We, of course, are not committed to any such views; nor does it seem to us that a reasonable doctrine of God's all-comprehensiveness involves any such consequences as are here supposed. As to personality, here again the difficulty seems to be chiefly verbal. If by this term be meant existence as a self-conscious, intelligent, and active being, there is no insuperable difficulty, surely, in predicating it of the universal spirit. If, however, it be insisted that in order to constitute personality there must be other spirits

or existences outside of this one from which it distinguishes itself, we may perhaps waive the question as merely verbal. The essential fact is that of intelligence and self-consciousness, and in this, it seems to us, there is nothing incompatible with the notion of infinite and universal being. It is sufficient that God, as the principle of unity in nature, distinguishes Himself from His own thoughts: He has then that self-consciousness which is akin to our own. In addition, He is omniscient; for He contains in Himself the consciousness of all creatures, whilst the 'external' causes, too, of our sensations are, if not direct volitions of His, yet none the less certainly present and comprehended in His intelligence.

All consciousness is properly consciousness of self, in the wider sense, that is, of the contents of one's own consciousness. To deny this is self-contradictory. If, for example, I am conscious of the sun, is not that warmth and spheral radiance, for the time being, within my consciousness? It is true I may imagine it as within the consciousness of other persons also, or even, rightly or wrongly, as emanating from a gaseous mass, or from some unknown permanent entities or forces in space, regarded as something outside of consciousness altogether. But this externality is evidently merely inferential and presumptive, and forms no part of my experience proper. Of external reality I am not conscious at all; but am merely joining together in belief these two ideas of

sun and externality. The externality that I think of is really in my consciousness all the time, and is not true externality at all, but merely ideal and relative. The sun, that is to say, as I think of it, is external to certain other mental pictures of mine, say the thought of my body and of the earth and atmosphere, but to my total consciousness not so: or, in other words, it is external to me in space, indeed, but then space itself, as I am aware of it, is nothing but the universal 'form,' or the bare quality of extension abstracted from our 'external' perceptions, and itself, therefore, purely mental, a mode of consciousness. So, then, all consciousness, so far as we can see, must be self-consciousness. If, then, God be cognisant immediately of our thoughts and feelings, it must be that verily "in Him we live and move and have our being." "Closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." Yet our individuality is preserved, and our actions are our own. Least of all can our evil desires and motives be attributed to Him. They are in His mind, but not His, and no more sully His purity than trees and clouds mar the clearness of the stream which reflects them. It is true they are not reflected, but actually present in, and conditioned by, Him; yet are they not His, *qua* evil. They may none the less be unacceptable to Him, or acceptable only in relation to the entire scheme of creation, which after all constitutes the true importance of anything.

He is conscious of us, not we of Him, for the most part: just as in our consciousness the particular ideas and feelings are supposed to be present successively to the permanent self, but are not conscious of one another, nor of the self in its totality. We, ordinarily, are not conscious of Him, but, as it seems to ourselves, isolated: hence we scour the universe, if by any means we may find traces of Him. Of a truth He is not far from every one of us.

"But God, if not the immediate agent in all phenonema, is nevertheless, at any rate, as First Cause, the real author of everything, both good and evil." True, God is the author of everything. But then, in order to judge of phenomena as results, ultimately, of God's providential agency, we must know their ultimate tendency and not merely their immediate character as pleasurable or painful, or as the thoughts, feelings, and actions of finite creatures with good and bad motives and intentions.

Power, wisdom, and goodness together without limit are scarcely imaginable in view of the actual character of the known universe. We must suppose, therefore, if at least we are to consider the question at all from a standpoint of human reason, that the eternally good Will and Intelligence is limited in some way in respect of the first, at any rate, of these three attributes, by the eternal nature of things, and that is to say by the necessities of His own nature, since there is nothing else that

exists prior to Him. Such a supposition is not necessarily detrimental to religion. It is still open to us, of course, if we feel impelled thereto, to consider that human reason is inadequate to such a question, and even to say, *Credo quia impossibile*: only in that case philosophy cannot help us, or go with us in our ascent of these heights of the heavenly way. We may, however, consistently with logic, still believe Him omnipotent in everything which does not involve contradiction: for it is impossible to say of any particular alleged limitation (our knowledge of the scheme of the universe being infinitesimal) that the negation of it would not involve this somewhere. If, for example, we suppose that it was not possible to create a perfect race of mankind *tout d'un coup*, it may be so, for aught we can tell, not because the thing in itself was impossible, but only incompatible with other and more important ends of Providence: while, on the other hand, it may indeed be that the thing itself, though we perhaps cannot tell how, would be inherently impossible and contradictory.

But, in truth, it matters little whether a thing be impossible as involving contradiction or for some other reason. The essential point is, that there are certain combinations which are eternally impossible because of principles which are not established in time by any Divine fiat or volition, but are inherent eternally in the nature of Divinity itself. And that, after all, is only another way

of saying that God is Law or Truth also, and not Love merely.

It must be acknowledged that the very notion of an universal consciousness and intelligent volition has, for a certain form of mind, grave difficulty. The 'material world,' superficially considered, seems to be entirely mechanical: that is to say, that its operations take place regularly and apparently of themselves, by virtue of their own inherent forces, as it is supposed, without consciousness, design, or will. But this is really a misconception, and entirely superficial. We know nothing immediately of the nature of force, power, or cause except as volition, in our own consciousness; nor can the operations of nature, considered as mechanical, ever explain themselves, except in terms of its more general operations (as gravitation, chemical attraction and repulsion, etc.), which again, if ever they should become explicable, it would be only in terms of still wider and more inexplicable ones, and so on. We come back, at furthest, to some one universal principle, let us say to 'persistence of force,' or some other; and this does not explain what force is, or prove at all its materiality, unconsciousness, or involuntariness. The mere fact that the operations of nature are orderly and regular does not prove them unconscious, or involuntary, and without intelligence, but only that the power or will immanent in them acts always promptly, infallibly, and without variableness or shadow of turning.

Deliberation is excluded, being unnecessary where knowledge is perfect and purpose fixed and unswerving. It is not a series of detached actions with thought intervening, but a continuous, free, and universal movement and progress —like the motions of an expert dancer, free from deliberation or hesitation, but the regularity of which is itself the proof of their intelligence.

More strictly considered, what we call mechanism, or operations of nature, is simply the series of our own sensational experiences, actual or potential, the conditions of which are believed to be the same for every one: that is to say, that given similar antecedent sensations both actual and potential, the results, too, are similar. In order to explain this we are obliged to infer 'forces,' or calculable power, external to ourselves. Now there is, or should be, no difficulty at all in conceiving that such power is conscious and intelligent; but, on the contrary, such a supposition is in accordance with the analogy of our internal experience of our own volitions and, as said, we have no direct experience at all of power or force other than these.

The pantheist and the agnostic reject the notion of Divine Personality as merely, at best, a refinement of anthropomorphism. "Is it not just possible," says Spencer, "that there is a mode of being as much transcending Intelligence and Will as these transcend mechanical motion?" Yes, surely. But if mechanical motion, if matter

itself, be after all only an affection or mode of mind or consciousness,—and we have seen that, so far as known to us, it is really nothing else, —why may not mind, too, with will and intelligence, be a mode or 'attribute' of that unknown something called Deity, included in it as matter is included in consciousness, and force itself perchance but a mode of consciousness or will? God, then, were both matter and spirit, understanding by this last, feeling or love, will, and intelligence—and infinitely more beside of which we, having no experience, have not as yet the least conception, but are obliged to conceive of Him exclusively through those attributes which alone we have in common with Him, of which alone we have, normally at least, any knowledge or consciousness. He is not to be identified with matter and spirit, yet perchance includes in Himself both these 'attributes' or natures.

That the eternal and world-producing consciousness exists, and is Love and Intelligence, whatever else it be, though not susceptible of logical proof, is evidenced outwardly to all by the nature and history of the universe, and to some inwardly, as it seems to them, by immediate intuitions and spiritual experiences.

The origin or emanation of phenomena from Spirit and Reason is evidenced, in the light of modern theories of evolution, not so much by special instances of adaptation, however numerous and remarkable, but rather by the "well-marked

dramatic tendency" of the whole process of nature, so far as known to us, towards the gradual production, preservation, and progressive improvement of a race of spiritual and intelligent creatures. All special adaptations may be accounted for sooner or later as inevitable consequences of the process; but this matters nothing. It matters nothing (if this were indeed possible) that every apparent instance of special design can be 'explained away' by showing that it was the inevitable result of preconditions, the order of the world-process being such as it is. There remains always the question, How came it about that the universe was of such a character, or its laws and processes such, as to issue in such excellent consequences?

Given a nebula, let us say, with gravity and consequent rotation and tangential energy, and we have for inevitable consequence a solar system, the rhythmic and harmonious kinetic equilibrium of sun, planets, and satellites. Given a planet rolling in sunbeams, and this planet with the sun playing upon it a certain system of mechanical forces wondrously complex, and you have everything needed for the mechanical and automatic generation of life, consciousness, Beauty, Love, Justice. Granted for argument's sake. But then one must still ask, Whence that nebula, containing within itself, *ex hypothesi*, all that promise and potency? In that wizard's cauldron was it, in truth, none other than blind

necessity or chance that mixed the ingredients? For the ingredients, it must be pointed out, were they nothing more than, in the first instance, homogeneous particles or force-centres with heterogeneity, let us say, of position only, were no less wonderful than the product, being calculated precisely for that consequence. The wonderful thing is then just this: that from that seemingly meaningless and indefinite homogeneity should be evolved in endless dramatic series all that wondrously definite and wondrously various heterogeneity which alone, in a material universe, can afford a habitat for spirit; then spirit itself, and its slow upward march of progress always, *ex hypothesi*, by mechanical necessity, towards the realisation of its own ideals of perfection.

Thus the familiar saying of Lord Bacon is vindicated and invested, in the light of modern knowledge, with far more pregnant meaning: that "a little philosophy inclineth men's minds to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth man's mind about to religion. For while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity."

There are, of course, various objections against this line of argument; for example, the objection of Hume: that a mental world, or universe of ideas, such as the mind of a Creator may be

conceived to be, "requires a cause as much as does a material world or universe of objects; and if similar in its arrangement, must require a similar cause." "Have we not the same reason to trace the ideal world into another ideal world or new intelligent principle? But if we stop and go no farther; why go so far? Why not stop at the material world? How can we satisfy ourselves without going on *in infinitum*?" From such logic the escape seems not easy or obvious. Nevertheless what does it amount to? The suggestion is, that it is no easier to imagine a mental than a material cosmos as existing from eternity by inherent necessity. But it is not a question really of a mental cosmos that is in any way analogous to the material one, which, being merely phenomenal, requires a cause to explain its existence; but of a transcendent spiritual principle, the real nature of which is unknown and inconceivable to us, but may be such that, if we could understand it, we should see that it explained itself, or rather was self-sufficient and absolute in such sort that there could be no question of any ulterior cause or explanation, yet which, at the same time, must, in its relation to the phenomenal universe, be such as to account for the impress of intelligence which is commensurate and coextensive with that universe as the stamp covers the surface of a piece of money; and that is to say, that it must be itself at once intelligent and creative. Something, at any rate,

must have existed eternally; and the difficulty is not in imagining a self-existent creative principle, but in supposing a cosmos to have emerged at any time without design, gradually or suddenly, from the transmutations of chaos. This latter hypothesis we must, indeed, hold to be for ever impossible—to human minds, at any rate, scarcely credible. We have to choose, then, between the conception of a transcendent world-producing Intelligence and that of an eternally existing cosmos or rationally ordered universe without intelligence, or an infinite series of such universes producing one another in succession. Of these two conceptions either is in a manner possible, and, let us admit for argument's sake, might be in a manner adequate, at any stage in the regression of thought, to account for the existence of nature. But there is this difference, that with the second conception the explanation would be at best never ultimate or really satisfactory, but must constantly demand that the inquiry be carried farther backward, and from the nature of the case we must always foresee that every such advance will be eternally vain and fruitless: while the creative principle, on the other hand, might be such that, if we could attain to a real cognisance and comprehension of it, we should be completely and for ever satisfied. Of a world of phenomena we know at least something, and may fairly say that such a world, or any series of them, existing from all eternity, bearing, too, all the marks of

rationality, yet not proceeding from intelligence, is a conception most difficult to realise, if not wholly incredible. It is true this might be due simply to the limitation of our experience. We do not assert, therefore, that Nature can prove to us that she is the daughter of Reason, but only that she everywhere suggests and, indeed, plainly declares it to us. She cannot prove this logically, any more than she can prove logically those more elementary and immediately indispensable truths which she teaches us and familiarises us with while we are yet children, so that we receive them unhesitatingly and with perfect confidence; as, for example, that in the world of everyday experience certain simple uniformities may be relied upon (fire burns, water cleanses, etc.); that the bodies of our fellow-creatures are inhabited and controlled by intelligences similar to our own; and so forth. These, too, it is open to us to call in question if we will, when our intellects have grown to maturity; and if we choose to dispute the evidence, it has no longer any real validity or cogency. None the less we all of us adhere, in such instances, to Nature's teaching, partly because it is easy and natural for us, and partly also because we find our account in doing so. We take care, then, for our material and worldly needs with such instruments as Nature provides: and shall we neglect altogether the necessities of our higher spiritual nature? Shall we suffer the instincts of worship, reverence, trust and piety to languish or

perish utterly through a useless and soul-destroying scepticism? Shall we renounce faith in Beauty as an objective and absolute reality? If there be possibly for each one of us, as multitudes have found that assuredly there is for them, a never-failing source of virtue and energy, shall we, because we cannot demonstrate its existence beforehand, set aside all chance and opportunity of personal access thereto?

It is true we are not bound to consider that 'matter,' or 'material force,' 'ether,' or whatever else is actually the existing basis of what are called material objects, was created in time. This again, in fact, is a most powerful and obvious objection to any possible theory of evolutionary theism. It may be said, namely, If God works thus in time, then He Himself presumably exists only in time, else He, working from all eternity or in infinite time, would an infinite while ago have attained all His purposes. No time could be imagined when those purposes were not already fully attained; or, in other words, they must have been already attained from all eternity. Thus, *e.g.*, there must already have existed an infinite number of spirits in a state of perfection, and what need, therefore, to create new ones? Our philosophy here fails us: those who have sufficient confidence in their deductions about infinities may make what conclusions they will, or such as their logic compels them to. They may, if they will, believe that ultimately all separate personalities

are reabsorbed into the eternal Godhead, thus necessitating a perpetual series of universes, or of time-cycles, for the production of new ones. Such is not, indeed, the hope of Christians. Love does not desire absorption, that is, extinction, but fellowship and communion. Whether the universe, or a series of them, be in any sense eternal, it is not necessary to determine. We may if we choose suppose an endless series of world-processes; yet none the less, we maintain, those processes, so far as rational, tending to rational ends, are most reasonably ascribed to conscious Intelligence. If the worlds, that is to say, are none of them strictly creations, creations from nothing, that is, but only successive transmutations, it matters nothing: the 'force behind them' must none the less be intelligent and conscious. And here, needless to say, we do not suppose processes of logic like those of the human understanding, any more than we imagine operations of a 'Divine Carpenter'; but something more akin to intuition, transcendental, indeed, and unimaginable by us in its true nature, yet nevertheless, as we have said, conscious: for intelligence without consciousness is a contradiction and an absurdity.

Actually, to those without materialistic bias, it remains always evident that 'mechanism,' or any undesigned and undirected action of forces merely dynamical and chemical is after all hopelessly inadequate to explain the most important even of

material phenomena. That the growth and reproduction, of organisms at any rate, is not explicable by such mechanism alone, and cannot reasonably be attributed to it. What, for instance (it is pointed out), must be the mechanism, if it *be* mechanism, of the germ-cell, which, from such assimilable materials as are available, builds up the body of a man in the likeness of his kind and, we may add, with the infinite special modifications which together constitute and produce, *ex hypothesi*, respectively so much of his individuality, physical and mental, as is due to his ancestry and parentage before conception![1] Nay further, "the assumed tremendous mechanism of the germ-cell has been developed, together with the whole of the rest of the parent organism and countless other germ-cells, from a previous germ-cell. What must the mechanism of this cell have been? And that of its endless predecessors? This is the Euclidean *reductio ad absurdum*."[2]

Or again, what is that responsive power in organisms which produces such wonderful and sudden changes in adjustment to the requirements of changed environments—*e.g.* when the water-

[1] It is often said, heredity points to mechanism. This we do not admit. Such mechanism as it points to is of a purely figurative and spiritual kind; physical mechanism (in a germ-cell) being surely inconceivable in matters so infinitely complex. The vital principle, in other words, like everything spiritual, and everything supernatural as we believe, acts always in accordance with laws of its own. The facts of heredity were not needed to prove *that*!

[2] J. S. Haldane, *Presidential Address to the British Association* (Section Physiology), 1908.

crowfoot is grown in soil and air, or when the plant is again transferred to water;[1] when a pigeon fed on meat converts its gizzard into a stomach, or the sea-gull fed upon grain, conversely? There is no room here for 'natural selection': the required change, in such cases, begins immediately in the very first instance.

Life, the mysterious co-ordinating principle, the Aristotelian "cause of form in organisms," is not, so far as can be ascertained, either physical or chemical; and the determination of its true nature, as many recognise, is beyond the province of science, and belongs to philosophy. It is something *sui generis*, and inscrutable. Admit that by chemical combination it could be produced, that is introduced into the physical world, still this would not explain it as due to chemistry. The life principle we may suppose is omnipresent, so to speak, behind matter, but a certain complex material is in the physical universe its indispensable instrument and medium. The possibility or impossibility of putting together in the laboratory this material makes no difference. We are concerned none the less with some independent principle of activity, or of directivity, working always in accordance with law, with such means as are available, but intelligently, for ends preconceived, and capable of responding adaptively to an indefinite extent to changed conditions. Now it is true that we have not here any

[1] Professor George Henslow, *Nineteenth Century and After*, 1906.

proof or indubitable manifestation of that Divine agency which to the eye of faith is manifested not in this only, but in all motion physical, chemical, and vital.[1] But the folly is at least apparent of those who assume that there is neither beneficent purpose, nor volition, nor intellectual consciousness anywhere other than that which develops itself in the cortex of a brain.

The doctrine of mechanical evolution as a complete theory is, in fact, by no means established; and it is well said that nothing but the fascination which a complete theory has always exercised upon men could account for its being accepted by any one at present as even probable. The truth is, if we are to have a complete and simple doctrine at all as to the origin of the physical universe, it must be, not one which explains everything upon mechanical principles, but which explains mechanism itself and all else in that universe by a single principle of volition at once orderly and intelligent.

And so, too, in the moral and spiritual sphere of human development, much is due plainly not to any ascertained natural processes such as the association of ideas, sympathy, etc., but rather to influences which, for the present at least, must be considered as in great part mysterious and

[1] It is not intended to assert that there can be motion of matter which is neither physical nor chemical but only that this motion may be mysteriously and intelligently directed. The vital principle, we imagine, does not itself move matter, but directs the energy which moves it. *Vide* (*e.g.*, Lodge, *Life and Matter*.

inscrutable. Do not the prophets and religious reformers with one voice proclaim the fact of their communion with Transcendent Power, and do they not manifestly derive from such communion, or supposed communion, refreshment, energy, inspiration, 'at-onement,' purification, love universal or relatively universal, enthusiasm for good? And is it not tolerably apparent that without the animating influence and example of such inspired spirits mankind must always have lapsed into, if indeed they had ever emerged from, sensuality and egoism, or at least relative exclusiveness? Can we truly measure what must have been the greatness and irreparableness of loss to the world if One had not been born into it whom western nations worship and whose personality indeed more than any other bore upon it conspicuously what seemed to be the very impress of Divinity?

It goes without saying, or should do so, that if the world-process be due to intelligence, this intelligence must be also benevolent. For not only is the most immediate and obvious end of that process the production, preservation, and progressive development of individual consciousness in the sphere of 'matter'; but in regard to this consciousness one most obvious and universal fact is just this, viz., its taking normally the form of enjoyment. We say normally, not merely because enjoyment is really the most prevalent form of consciousness, however much the fact be overlooked or denied by those who derive enjoy-

ment from the indulgence of a morose humour or who regard everything through the nebulous gloom of unfavourable conditions which envelops them personally; but because it is, so to speak, the evident intention of organic mechanism. So long as this machinery is working normally under conditions favourable in all respects to the continuance of its functioning, enjoyment is the almost uninterrupted consequence. Trouble of any kind injures proportionately the machinery, and tends to impair or hinder its action and efficiency: thus life becomes precarious in proportion as its value diminishes. The pictures drawn of the animal creation as a scene of dreadful carnage, waste, and suffering are utterly wanting in justice and proportion. Death, in those creatures which have attained to any high degree of consciousness, is relatively but a very small part of life, however painful. Pain and fear are not normal, but, so far as one can see, merely Nature's warning and safeguard that death come not prematurely, namely, before reproduction has been provided for. That death must overtake all eventually is no evil so long as it is not anticipated. The mere shortness of individual existence is of no importance whatever to those who are not conscious of it and do not cry *Eheu fugaces*. Reproduction, with its concomitants, variation and survival of the fittest, these are among the chief means appointed for improvement; and that is as much as to say, that death is indispensable. The indi-

vidual is nothing; those which survive are those best fitted for enjoyment. Waste is nothing, where one's resources are limitless.

In order to realise that enjoyment is an end of creation we have but to imagine a world in which all creatures were attracted, or impelled by their nervous mechanism, towards what is painful, as the moth to the candle; in which the ordinary functions of life normally performed, the ordinary exercise of the faculties of sight and hearing, etc., and the flow of ideas in the mind, were painful, and pleasure only incidental and occasional, when the bodily mechanism was out of gear; in which the Spencerian law, that pleasure is a concomitant of that which increases, pain of that which diminishes vitality, were reversed; in which earth and sky and the exposed surfaces of objects were clothed with ugliness, the beautiful being manifested only in the bowels of the earth, in deserts and ocean beds, in the roots of plants and the more secret and internal parts of animals. That pain, too, may be designed as a means, being "a potent factor, if not indeed the chief of factors, in the evolution of character and soul attributes," we are far from denying. But this merely clinches our argument. For moral character, as we have tried to show elsewhere, is essentially universal benevolence and whatever is akin to it. It is consequently that which tends in the long run to the greatest aggregate of enjoyment. But then, obviously, it was not necessary to this end of the

development of character that pain should be normal to human nature or in general, probably, that it should exceed its actual limits. The design was, one may imagine, that pleasure should be normal, but that pain too should be provided for incidentally, and within well-defined limits, for a higher end and greater pleasure in the long run.

You may of course say: that what tended to life should in general have become pleasurable, and what tended to death painful, this is both natural and inevitable, because, in the struggle for existence, those who found it so would have a great advantage over the rest, and so these latter would tend to be eliminated. True indeed. This is natural, as everything is natural that takes place normally in Nature. But how is it that the nature of things is just so and not otherwise, as conceivably it might have been? Why is it that enjoyment, and not pain, prompts the will towards the perpetuation of itself and by consequence, through 'natural selection,' has come to be associated with what tends to life? Why is it that consciousness itself, and the normal exercise of faculties, was not made at once painful and attractive or unavoidable? Suppose that in the first instance the will or nervous mechanism had been attracted by an affinity towards such objects as were causes of pain: it is evident that 'natural selection,' so far from operating to cure this evil, would have augmented it, by bringing it about

that those very things which had the greatest tendency to intensify and prolong life would have become in course of time the most painful. But it is not so: and, as it is, these two processes of volitional attraction and repulsion and 'natural selection' act together harmoniously for beneficent ends. These institutions, and countless others no less beneficent, seem to us, as we say, natural, because familiar to experience, or deducible from what is familiar, so that most of us can scarcely imagine them otherwise; just as we do not wonder at sunrise and sunset. They have all doubtless their explanation, if we can discover it: that is to say, they are resolvable into other and more primary laws or conditions of nature, which account for them by implication. But the fact is none the less true, and noteworthy, that the processes of nature, or those original institutions and canons which have initiated and regulate them, are, as it were, "confederate and linked together" for the end of enjoyment, and ultimately for higher and higher forms of it.

For, as we should expect to find, the world having originated from Benevolence, so, in fact, the tendency and aspiration of the last and highest masterpiece of evolution is towards the same excellence of nature. Sex, maternity, prolongation of infant dependency, sympathetic imagination, community of interest, all may be regarded as so many devices for the gradual attainment of this end; and their united potency in the higher races

of mankind becomes always greater and greater. If there is one fact that is patent in the history of the more advanced nation it is assuredly just this gradual increase of mutual kindliness and sympathy. Delight in cruelty for its own sake, which in former ages was certainly common enough and one may almost say normal to humanity, being an incidental consequence, as we may consider, of the struggle for existence in war and hunting, is fast becoming a rare instance of atavism, evinced for the most part only by undeveloped boys, and less and less even by these. The outlook and range of sympathetic feeling in civilised communities is ever widening, and fulness of life and capacity for enjoyment increase proportionately: enjoyment, moreover, is raised to a higher plane and becomes superior to many vicissitudes. Thus mankind in this respect, as in others, approaches towards the spiritual image of the Creator. Nevertheless, as resentment, vindictiveness, and malicious rivalry are always prevalent, and the outflowing currents of our loves being prone to settle themselves in every hollow, forming therein unwholesome and stagnant puddles and even deep pools and gullies of partiality and exclusiveness, there was absolutely needed, in order to overcome these evils, a direct influx of the higher divine spirit with supreme example and exhortation: *Love your enemies, pray for them that persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father which is in Heaven.*

A misdirected ingenuity may always find insuperable objections against an 'argument from design,' however stated. Thus it may be said: Design in any case must always work through means, and such means must be adequate to produce the end. This then being so, where is the necessity for any design at all, since the means, without design, are a sufficient explanation of the result?[1] To this should we reply: Yes, but the existence of the means has still to be accounted for. The rejoinder will be again: The means must in any case have been produced through other and prior means, and those again must have been adequate without design, and so on *ad infinitum*. Now we for our part do not admit this as certain, that every end must have been produced through adequate means, and every means, again, through others. On the contrary, that means, in the sense of mechanism or material causes as distinguished from volition, can of themselves produce anything whatsoever, is in our view an entirely rash assumption. Such means do not in truth explain anything, as we have urged more than once. Much more any such means, without reason, must always be inadequate to explain the production of the highest ends, whether it be of a material cosmos, or of an individual organism, or of a developed human spirit, or what not. Given a rational product, the means to that product, to be adequate, must themselves be rationally ordered even though

[1] Cf. Lotze, *Philosophy of Religion*, § x.

mechanical, being calculated for that end, and you must come back ultimately, and why not immediately, to a first cause which, being itself Reason and transcendently powerful, is alone adequate to the conception and production, without means, of rational mechanism. Still it is open to any one to argue in the former fashion, if he will. He may, that is, consider all phenomena as produced merely by antecedent phenomena and those antecedents by others, and so on *in infinitum*. Such a view is possible though, as we hold, neither probable nor in the truest sense reasonable. It is quite true, then, that the existence of a world-forming Intelligence cannot be rigorously demonstrated; and, if you will, the further admission may be made (for the sake of argument) that in strict logic, and moral considerations apart, it is neither probable nor improbable. And similarly, it is always easy for a perverse and faithless intellect to confute any good and useful argument which Nature furnishes us with, operating as she does, so far as practicable, for our preservation, edification, and well-being. Thus, Nature having provided us with earthly companions and associates with a view to the development of our moral capabilities, and indicating to us by clear signs the existence of these and their intelligent and amicable correspondence with us through the motions of their bodily organs, it is open to us to argue, if we choose: that those bodily signs or motions, however seemingly rational and appropriate, are

after all no real proof, and indeed no evidence, properly speaking, of the reality of what they suggest to us; and that those supposed fellow-creatures and congeners of ours may be nothing more than the phantoms of an orderly dream or vision. Causality, so far as revealed in experience, being only a relation or category of subjective phenomena, by what warrant do I infer objective causes behind those physical appearances? Such an objection, unreasonable as it is, can never be refuted except on moral grounds. It is true that in those matters of immediate and indispensable necessity Nature does not commonly give us any option, but impels us to believe irresistibly at first; and it is only subsequently, when the understanding is growing to maturity, and can in a manner take care of itself, that any real doubt becomes possible to us upon such questions. But in other respects such cases are not different from that now under consideration. Nature, that is to say, suggests to us everywhere by innumerable tokens, and most of all by the entire character of her manifestations taken together as a series, that we moral and intelligent spirits of earth are not alone in a world of blind forces, but the children of an eternal Father, and may have therefore an inheritance in His everlasting kingdom. This gospel we may lay hold of or reject, as we choose. That it is our duty to lay hold of it can hardly be doubtful, if duty be that which tends most to the good of ourselves and all creatures and to the fulfilment

of our highest perceivable destiny. It is not a case for suspending judgment; for the cause of truth, in any fundamental question, can never be advanced in that way, when the moral grounds of faith have been once clearly apprehended. To the mature and philosophic intellect all fundamental questions are, theoretically, debatable; but our business is not to stand debating for ever, but to follow gladly and gratefully there where, as it seems, our true well-being calls and beckons to us.

In order to know anything, truly and certainly it is necessary to be that thing, or to comprise it within one's subjective consciousness. Assured and indubitable knowledge of God, therefore, is only to be attained by immediate union or communion with Him. God, that is, or some infinitesimal portion of Him, containing, however, something of His essential nature, must become part of our consciousness, for the time being at any rate, as we are continuously present to His consciousness and comprised in it. None the less it is evident that many who have not this immediate consciousness of God in any proper sense have yet attained, or retained, after some period of doubts and difficulties, a degree at least of practical assurance as to His existence and character; and this evidently is owing to a suitable discipline of thoughts and habits, as is well understood and provided for in the various religious systems and cults.

Since the course of nature, though teeming everywhere with evidences of power and goodness, does not reveal clearly and unmistakably the personality of God, it results that minds of a certain unaffectionate and merely poetical and reverential cast will always be apt to emphasise this unknowableness, and will be content to worship an unfathomable and nameless mystery, or moral order of the universe, or Spinozistic Substance, or what not. It will even seem to them that the divine solitude of Nature is profaned by the supposition of a personal consciousness immanent therein: as in certain religious paintings the beauty of the landscape is marred (so it seems to us) by the somewhat grotesque image of an old, bearded man seated upon the clouds. But the profanation is not really in the supposition of a universal consciousness as such, but in the unworthy and vaguely anthropomorphic images which flit through the mind when we strive to realise it. God is no "magnified and non-natural man." Though a spirit and conscious, according to the proper meaning of these terms, He is doubtless infinitely more, the nature of which is not at present conceivable to us, but is such as ravishes the souls of those who at any time have attained to the least glimpse of it. It is only because we have never known Him that we do not altogether desire Him. And as for external nature, those who have had consciousness of God tell us that this too has become transfigured for

them with a new glory—just as the fair garments of a prince acquire a new grace when disposed upon his person.

Meantime, however, there is always a minority at least to whom life without positive knowledge and consciousness of their Creator and Sustainer is barely tolerable. And the fact is undeniable that innumerable persons in many ages and countries have actually what may be called, in view of its immediateness and indubitableness, a *sense* of the reality and nearness of a spiritual Presence and Power in their souls, not themselves, though to some of them at times their individuality may seem to be almost wholly merged in it: and that this Presence and Power, invoked as it is by divers names and often inseparably connected in their minds with various special conceptions and doctrines in accordance with their intellectual prepossessions, seems to them none the less always to unite and comprise in itself all that they can imagine of what is most good, and beautiful, and unchangeably faithful and true. This consciousness and assurance may come gradually or suddenly, through means or channels accredited in one's circle or otherwise; but its concomitants and effects are the same. A joy unspeakable, a love often boundless and ineffable, a wonder and adoration never before experienced, a new splendour and significance in the meanest phenomena, a solution of the heavy enigma of existence, a reconciliation and a peace that passeth

understanding. And in the sequel? An entire abandonment of old vices and fleshly weaknesses hitherto unconquerable; an indifference, unless momentarily, to petty trials and annoyances; a path irradiated as with a perpetual, or it may be an intermittent, sunshine; a new power and energy for good reinforceable at intervals by voluntarily renewed intercourse and communion; a detachment more or less complete from aims and ambitions merely worldly and selfish, often at the same time a broad sympathy and practical helpfulness, a constant readiness and wisdom and confidence in difficult circumstances and perilous undertakings for the service of mankind and promotion of the divine kingdom of righteousness. This alone, we are assured, is the secret of true and permanent happiness, the talisman against all trials. This alone will console us in every kind of loss, bereavement, and affliction, and in prosperity will save us from satiety and *ennui*. Even the æsthetic sensibility, which in unregenerate natures grows cold and languishes with increasing age, becomes in these favoured ones perennially fresh. Their youth is "renewed like the eagle." "So joy bursts out into praise, and all things look brilliant; and hardship seems easy, and duty becomes delight, and contempt is not felt, and every morsel of bread is sweet. Then, though we know that the physical universe has fixed unaltering laws, we cannot help seeing God's hand in events. Whatever happens, we think of

as His mercies, His kindness, or His visitations and His chastisements; everything comes to us from His love. Thus the whole world is fresh to us with a sweetness before untasted. All things are ours, whether affliction or pleasure, health or pain. Old things are passed away; behold! all things are become new; and the soul wonders, and admires, and gives thanks, and exults like the child on a summer's day;—and understands that she *is* as a newborn child: she has undergone a New Birth! It is not birth after the flesh, but a birth of the Spirit, birth into a heavenly union, birth into the family of God. Why need she scruple to say, that she is 'partaker of the divine nature,' if God loves her and dwells in her bosom?"

"I remember," says one, "the night and almost the very spot on the hilltop, where my soul opened out, as it were, into the Infinite, and there was a rushing together of the two worlds, the inner and the outer. It was deep calling unto deep,—the deep that my own struggle had opened up within being answered by the unfathomable deep without, reaching beyond the stars. I stood alone with Him who had made me—did not seek Him, but felt the perfect union of my spirit with His. . . . I could not any more have doubted that *He* was there than that I was. Indeed, I felt myself to be, if possible, the less real of the two. My highest faith in God and truest idea of Him were then born in me. Since that time no

discussion that I have heard of the proofs of God's existence has been able to shake my faith. Having once felt the presence of God's spirit, I have never lost it again for long. My most assuring evidence of His existence is deeply rooted in that hour of vision, in the memory of that supreme experience, and in the conviction, gained from reading and reflection, that something the same has come to all who have found God."

It is no valid objection against the reality of this spiritual knowledge, that the initiated have framed for themselves, or adopted from others, the most various and often mutually incompatible conceptions of its object, and have attributed to His direct authority and inspiration a great variety of more or less conflicting doctrines and principles. This was inevitable, and might have been inferred beforehand from the association of ideas—that most fertile source and sustainer, as Locke long ago pointed out, of sectarian errors and irreconcilable differences. If inspiration or spiritual experience comes to anyone, as it seems, through some particular channel or by some particular means or instrument which opens the way for it, it was inevitable that this channel or instrument, even if it be not regarded by him as the exclusive source of that inspiration and its *sine qua non*, should at all events partake in his mind of its sacredness and, if human, of its authority. If the way be opened up to a supernatural or transcendental communion through the

influence of some particular personality or ecclesiastical or other system, it was inevitable that the preconceptions derived beforehand from that influence should often be regarded as in some sort divinely authorised and sanctioned by, and should even mould and mingle themselves in some degree directly and inseparably with, those genuine revelations and spiritual intuitions. If I pray to the Virgin and the saints, and grace come to me (even though it be not through the help of an actual illusory vision of the form of one or other of them, as may sometimes happen) it is certain that I shall credit the matter to their power and mediation ; yet the real occasion may be found in nothing but the increased receptivity of my own spirit. If transcendental experience is to be interpreted through the intellect, it must be through such notions as this intellect is prepossessed with : but how few there are can distinguish between the experience or intuition itself, which is (in part at least) spiritual, and the interpretation which is natural and of purely human authority.

Revelations, for the most part, may be considered as so many "veridical hallucinations" of the intellect. That is to say that, just as in those phantasmal appearances of dying persons which so many trustworthy witnesses have reported and left on record, the costume and other details may bear evidence sometimes of having been constructed by the imagination of the percipient in

accordance with subjective associations and preconceptions, while yet there is conveyed none the less truly from the dying person the thought of himself, often too some actual intimation of his dying condition with more or less of its attendant circumstances physical and mental, so here: we are not to infer from the incredibility of intellectual inferences and interpretations that all is necessarily illusion.

What is undeniable, and should be evident even to the uninitiated, is the existence, 'behind' or 'beneath' the normal consciousness and power of mortals, of a mysterious and seemingly inexhaustible reservoir of feeling and energy in harmony with the permanent tendencies of the spiritual universe, which becomes usually in those who find access to it the greatest power for good in their lives, and the character of which is upon the whole suggestive of something universal, or at least more than any merely individual substratum of the personalities concerned as developed through the physical organism.

There are experiences the nature of which, not consisting probably in any mere complex of more simple impressions, familiar to other persons, is known only to those who have them, nor is comprehended even by these. Nevertheless something may be inferred legitimately from the effects, if these be found to have a certain uniform character, as we have indicated. In the light of a broad, comprehensive survey of those transcend-

ent experiences and of the subsequent lives of those who have recorded them, we may say actually with the Apostle: the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance. Now the tree is known by its fruits.

This it is which gives reasonable ground for the faith, which in the initiated amounts usually to the most absolute assurance, that this Divine which reveals itself more or less clearly in the mystical consciousness has its source not merely in a 'sub-liminal' and sublimated portion of the self, still isolated, but is itself the one all-binding, all-comprehending reality, that is Love Universal. And why should we doubt this? What is there, pray, in the minds of weak mortals that, working unaided in their own depths, they should conceive and bring forth this seeming revelation and radiant influx, this close and intimate consciousness and realisation, and these fruits, of limitless Perfection?

In form the beatific vision is indefinitely variable and depends largely upon a person's theological equipment. The imagination is here reactive in proportion as the reality is difficult or impossible to be apprehended. On the other hand, theology may be wholly wanting. It is even probable, that in the darkest backwoods of polytheism and barbaric atheism something of this Divine communion may have been experienced; the vision being wholly darkened to the under-

standing through ignorance and superstition. The Catholic element, in all cases, is to be found much more in what is, as we say, *felt* than in that which is taught verbally. Even the negations of the Neo-Platonists and others ought not to exclude them necessarily from the true Church. Does anyone really suppose that men of intellect and sense spent their lives in the enthusiastic cult of nothingness, and nourished themselves upon the occasional rapturous intuition of, and seeming ecstatic union with, that simply? Rather we must surely take all such negative descriptions as indicating only the hopeless inadequacy of intellectual conceptions and language. The Infinite One-ness, said the Neo-Platonising Christians, is the negation of all that can be predicated. God is Non-Being: that is, above all our notions of being. And nothing surely is more probable than this: that the highest intellectual conceptions of ours are after all not so much real qualities, but only as it were shadows or adumbrations, of Divinity—which would account, perhaps, for our inability to imagine how, *e.g.*, beauty and goodness can exist absolutely, without any indispensable relation to finite intelligence or sensibility.

"In all the workings of my mind," says Francis Newman, "about Tri-unity, Incarnation, Atonement, the Fall, Resurrection, Immortality, Eternal Punishment, how little had any of these to do with the inward exercises of my soul towards

God! He was still the same, immutably glorious: not one feature of His countenance had altered to my gaze, or could alter. This surely was the God whom Christ came to reveal, and bring us into fellowship with: this is that about which Christians ought to have no controversy, but which they should unitedly, concordantly, themselves enjoy and exhibit to the heathen. But oh, Christendom! what dost thou believe and teach? The heathen cry out to thee, Physician, heal thyself."

But is the vision for ever unattainable to the many, or to anyone? No one assuredly is entitled to say so; and we should at least be careful that we do not hinder it by any "self-suggestion of its impossibility"—in religious language, 'evil heart of unbelief.' The new birth, or entry of the Divine life into the soul, so far from being impossible, is perhaps inevitable, given certain conditions of mental protoplasm. This is the true hope of man: the only hope remaining to him, possibly, in the long run. It is very conceivable that here, too, there may be a survival of the fittest: that in a disembodied condition those souls only will survive and escape dissolution which can draw strength and nutriment from a spiritual environment. And so it is said, This is life eternal, even the knowledge of God.

Printed by
MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED
Edinburgh

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Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 11 March, 2020